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YOSEMITE

NATIONAL PARK JOURNAL

Everybody Loves a Road Trip

A Perfect Weekend in the Park
pg. 12

4 Amazing Routes

PLUS:
6 More California National Parks

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There are sunsets.
Then there's basking in the horizon's golden glow
and adventuring through verdant forests on the edge of the sparkling sea.
That's more than beautiful, it's
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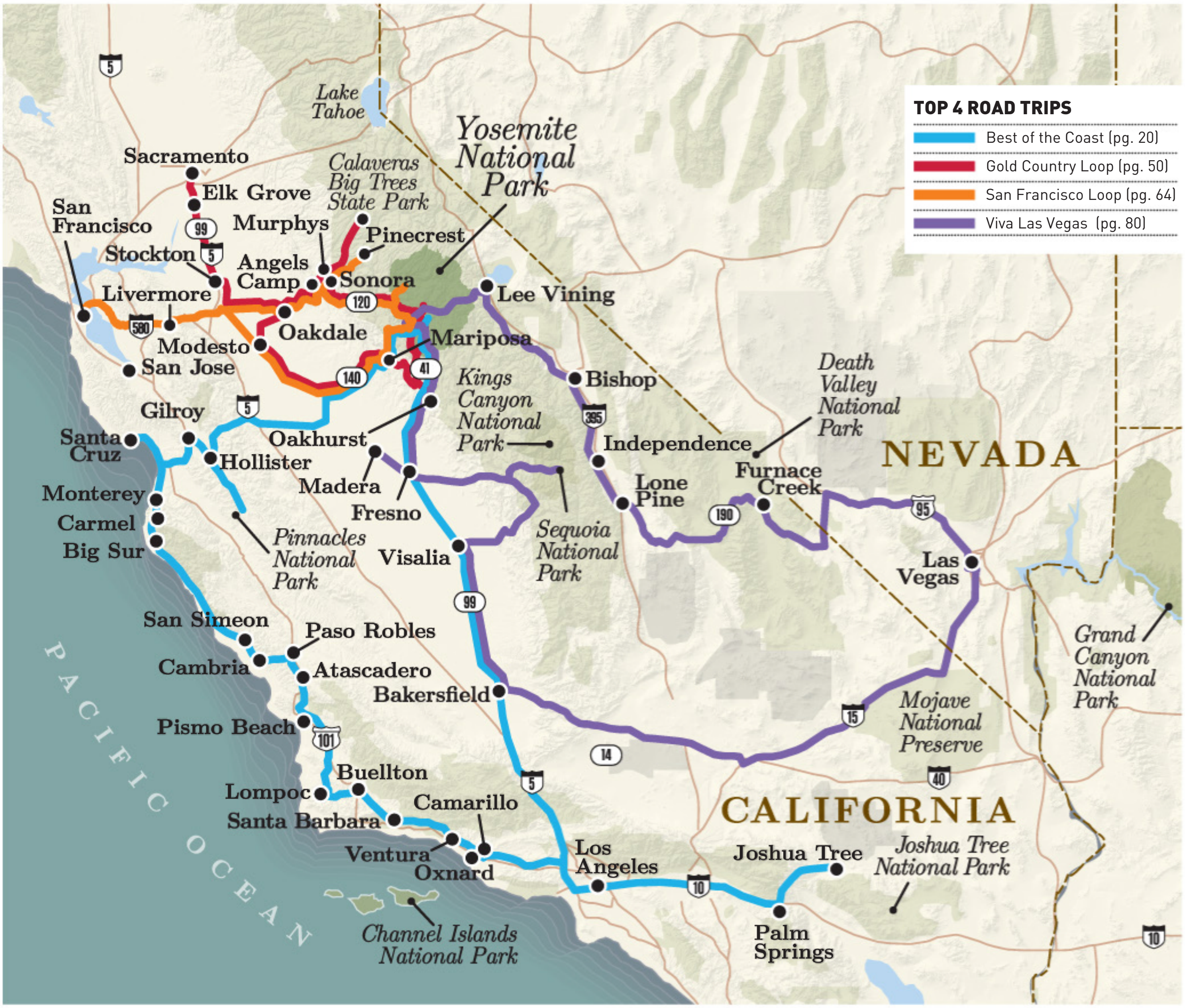
4 Road Trips

Here are four of our all-time favorite road trips to Yosemite National Park—each with its own scenic wonders, charming towns and one-of-a-kind attractions. Turn to page 20 to start dreaming.


TOP 4 ROAD TRIPS
Best of the Coast (pg. 20)
Gold Country Loop (pg. 50)
San Francisco Loop (pg. 64)
Viva Las Vegas (pg. 80)
Lake Tahoe
Yosemite National Park
Sacramento
Calaveras Big Trees State Park
Elk Grove
San Francisco
Murphys
Pinecrest
Stockton
Angels Camp
Sonora
Lee Vining
Livermore
Oakdale
Modesto
Mariposa
San Jose
Bishop
Kings Canyon National Park
Gilroy
Santa Cruz
Oakhurst
Hollister
Independence
Death Valley National Park
NEVADA
Madera
Furnace Creek
Lone Pine
Monterey
Fresno
Carmel
Big Sur
Pinnacles National Park
Visalia
Sequoia National Park
Las Vegas
San Simeon
Paso Robles
Cambria
Atascadero
Grand Canyon National Park
Bakersfield
Mojave National Preserve
Pismo Beach
Buellton
Lompoc
Camarillo
CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara
Ventura
Oxnard
Los Angeles
Joshua Tree
Joshua Tree National Park
Palm Springs
Channel Islands National Park
PACIFIC OCEAN
5
99
580
120
140
41
395
190
95
15
14
101
40
10

Map by Peter Sucheski

Editor's Note

A few years ago, my little sister got a seasonal job in Death Valley National Park. There was only one problem: the job started the following week and there wasn't enough time to book an airline ticket for her cat to come join her. I'd never visited Death Valley, so I took a few days off work and offered to drive them both from Denver to the California desert. A couple friends agreed to come, and we began to get excited at the prospect of a girls' road trip.

In the days leading up to the adventure, my friends canceled one by one and suddenly I was left with the prospect of driving back across the country alone. On Friday, my husband threw out a Hail Mary. If he could be back in time for his 8 a.m. Monday class, he would help share the driving. We glossed over the fact that he was allergic to cats and crowned him as Husband of the Year.

The next morning we set off in the darkness in my Subaru. Our leisurely road trip had been turned into a 48-hour marathon, with 1,800 miles of highway between us and Monday morning.

By mid-afternoon we were in western Utah, and I was tired of pointing out all the places my husband and I's adventures had taken us without getting to show them to my sister up close. I took a backroad and we found ourselves hiking down past the rim of Bryce Canyon National Park, the pink and orange hoodoos glowing against the bluebird sky.

Our detour meant we'd be pulling into Death Valley even later than originally expected but seeing my sister's face as she experienced one of my favorite landscapes was worth it.

The sun set over the Nevada desert and we passed the lights of the Las Vegas Strip, fueling up on In-N-Out as a huge full moon rose over the horizon. The moonlight illuminated the landscape as we finally pulled up to my sister's new home, casting eerie shadows. Exhausted, we set an alarm and caught a few hours of sleep, my stuffed-up husband opting to sleep in the car since the allergies had finally won.

It was still dark when we said our goodbyes the next morning. We desperately needed coffee, but the pull-off for Badwater Basin beckoned and I took it on a whim. The lowest place in North America was a landscape that had always fascinated me and I couldn't in good faith leave the park without having laid eyes on it.

The moon still hung overhead as we wandered out onto the salt flats, the sky slowly brightening into hues of purple and pink and orange until the sun crested the horizon. We were the only living things out there, though the silence made it feel like perhaps we were the only living souls in the entire world. It was magical.

By that evening, even the early-2000's hip-hop blasting through the speakers wasn't enough to cheer us up. It turns out driving 1,800 miles in 48 hours isn't quite as much fun as it sounds. Despite how grumpy we were by the time we finally got home, I couldn't get the image of that sunrise out of my mind.

The thing about travel is, I never regret it. Whether it's a rained-out camping trip, a marathon cross-country drive or this past year's attempt to summit Tanzania's Mt. Kilimanjaro where I got COVID-19 at 14,000 feet and had to call it quits—travel is always worth it.

Time has a way of smoothing out the rough edges of our experiences and leaving only the golden memories of beautiful sunrises, breathtaking hikes, delicious food and life-changing experiences. Travel isn't always easy, but it's always rewarding.

Turn to page 80 to find a much better road trip to Death Valley than the one I took. Whatever route you choose, make sure you leave time for all the experiences travel brings: the good, the bad and the unexpected. I know it will leave its mark on your memory.

—Mikaela Ruland
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Welcome to Magic

Get ready to dive into the best of Yosemite, from sparkling waterfalls to stoic granite faces. Plan your perfect trip with a park map, weekend itinerary, trail guide and more.

El Capitan (Grant Ordelheide)

4 **In the Park**
Discover where to stay and what to see and do in Yosemite National Park.

60 **Around the Clock**
Find tips for photographing Yosemite at all hours of the day and night.

FEATURES

76 **Yosemite's Water Wars**
One hundred years after flooding Hetch Hetchy, central California's water struggles have only intensified.

88 **A Forgotten History**
Much of Yosemite and the West were built by Chinese immigrants, but their stories are often lost in time.

ROAD TRIPS

20 **Best of the Coast**
From coastal towns along sparkling beaches to Channel Islands and Pinnacles national parks, this route gives you the best of the central coast.

50 **Gold Country Loop**
Between Sacramento and Yosemite, discover charming Gold Rush towns, a stunning state park and outdoor activities.

64 **San Francisco Loop**
Explore San Francisco before heading inland for historic towns, orchard and vineyard experiences and lakeside adventures.

80 **Viva Las Vegas**
Explore Death Valley, Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia national parks on this stunning scenic drive.

ON THE COVER: Boardwalk leading to Yosemite Falls (Photo by Grant Ordelheide)

Park Map

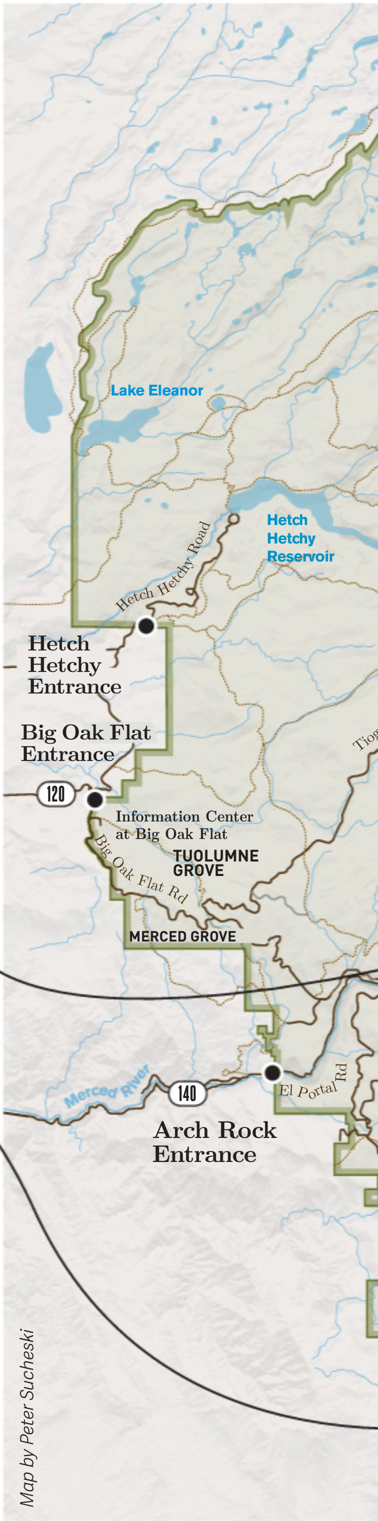
Spend less time driving and more time taking in the views by orienting yourself with this Yosemite National Park map.

El Capitan

Revered by rock climbers and travelers alike, this 3,000-foot-high granite formation sits in Yosemite Valley. Get a magnificent view of it from Valley View or El Capitan Meadows.

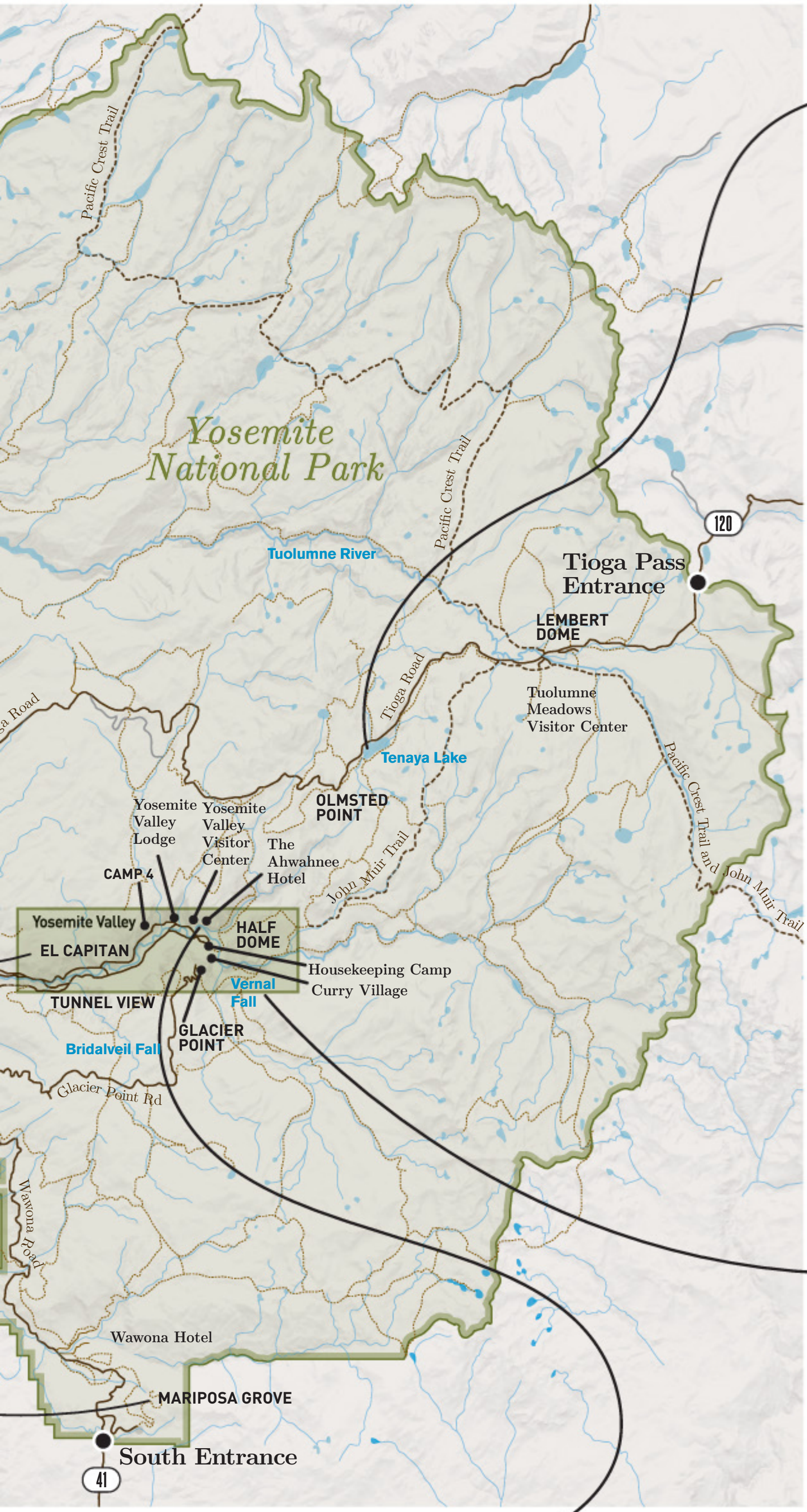
Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias

This majestic grove of trees consists of 300-foot-tall giant sequoias and is located above Yosemite Valley in Wawona close to the South Entrance of the park. Walk the moderately-rated Grizzly Giant Loop Trail, a 2-mile stroll that circles the edge of the grove. *See page 12.*


Lake Eleanor
Hetch Hetchy Reservoir
Hetch Hetchy Road
Hetch Hetchy Entrance
Big Oak Flat Entrance
120
Information Center at Big Oak Flat
TUOLUMNE GROVE
Big Oak Flat Rd
MERCED GROVE
Merced River
140
El Portal Rd
Arch Rock Entrance

Map by Peter Sucheski

PHOTOS: El Capitan (Anna Wagner), Mariposa Grove (Depositphotos), Tenaya Lake (Dollar Photos), Vernal Fall (Laquan Franklin), The Ahwahnee Hotel (Grant Ordelheide)


Pacific Crest Trail
Yosemite National Park
Pacific Crest Trail
120
Tuolumne River
Tioga Pass Entrance
LEMBERT DOME
Tioga Road
a Road
Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center
Tenaya Lake
Pacific Crest Trail and John Muir Trail
OLMSTED POINT
Yosemite Valley Lodge
Yosemite Valley Visitor Center
The Ahwahnee Hotel
John Muir Trail
CAMP 4
Yosemite Valley
EL CAPITAN
HALF DOME
Housekeeping Camp
Curry Village
Vernal Fall
TUNNEL VIEW
GLACIER POINT
Bridalveil Fall
Glacier Point Rd
Wawona Road
Wawona Hotel
MARIPOSA GROVE
South Entrance
41

Tenaya Lake

The largest lake in Yosemite, Tenaya is named after the Ahwahneechee chief who fought valiantly against the Mariposa Battalion. Picnic on the lake's shores or take a canoe or kayak out on its crystal clear waters.

Vernal Fall

A short 1.2-mile hike leads you to Vernal Fall, a gorgeous waterfall along the popular Mist Trail. *See page 12.*

The Ahwahnee Hotel

Built in 1927, this upscale historic hotel offers beautiful grounds to stroll through and a fantastic dining room where you can eat, even if you're not staying there. Rustic but elegant chandeliers hang from a 34-foot-high ceiling while floor-to-ceiling windows offer beautiful views of the park from the dining room. *See page 13.*

Five Ways to See Yosemite

Comprised of more than 1,100 square miles of mountainous terrain, Yosemite National Park is big. To make the most of your trip—and to spend less time driving—you'll want to decide ahead of time which of the five entrances to the park makes most sense for you to use. If you're driving from San Francisco, take the **Big Oak Flat** or **Arch Rock** entrances. Travelers coming from Los Angeles or other parts of Southern California should use the **South Entrance**. From the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada (like Lake Tahoe or Las Vegas), take the **Tioga Pass Entrance**. Note that you can only get into the park from the east when Tioga Pass is open, late spring through early fall. The last entrance is **Hetch Hetchy**, an area isolated from the rest of the park's roads. The main draw of this northernmost entrance is the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir (see pg. 76).

PHOTOS: Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, Iron Door Saloon sign in Groveland, Tunnel View in Yosemite (Depositphotos), Tenaya Lake (Grant Ordelheide), Hetch Hetchy Wapama Falls Bridge (Kim Carroll Photography/ Courtesy of Rush Creek Lodge)

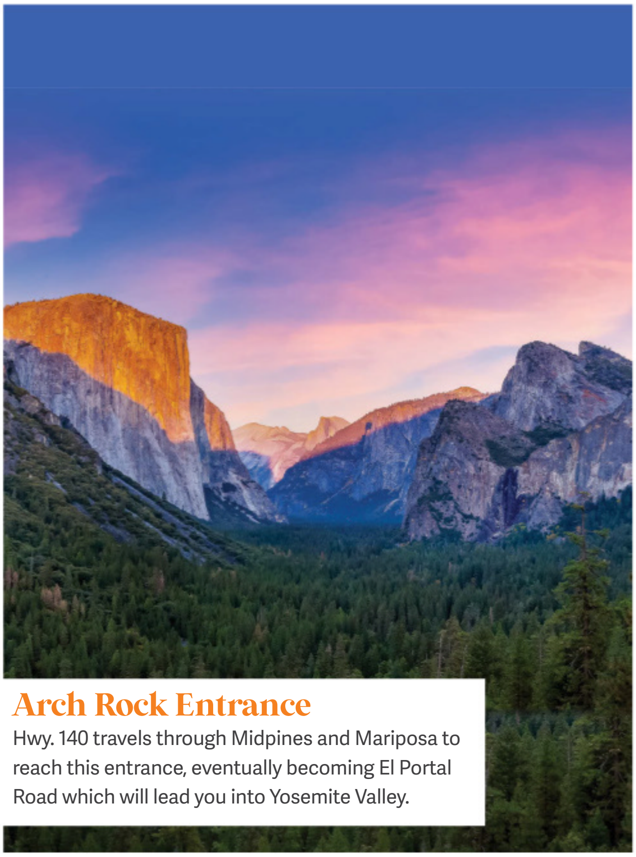
South Entrance

This entrance will put you closest to the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. Take Hwy. 41 through Fish Camp until it becomes Wawona Road. Follow it to the grove and Yosemite Valley.

IRON DOOR
SALOON
EST. 1852
CALIFORNIA'S OLDEST SALOON
FAMILIES WELCOME
OPEN
LIVE MUSIC FRI & SAT
Iron Door Grill
GROVELAND HOTEL

Big Oak Flat Entrance

Take Hwy. 120 through Groveland to reach Yosemite Valley or Tioga Road. This road is quite winding so nervous drivers may want to choose a different route.



Arch Rock Entrance

Hwy. 140 travels through Midpines and Mariposa to reach this entrance, eventually becoming El Portal Road which will lead you into Yosemite Valley.

Tioga Pass Entrance

From Lee Vining, climb west into the Sierras on Hwy. 120 until it becomes Tioga Road. This road is open seasonally and is the easiest access to Tuolumne Meadows.

Hetch Hetchy Entrance

Less than 1% of park visitors ever make it to Hetch Hetchy. Access it via Hwy. 120 and Evergreen Road. To visit the rest of the park, leave the way you came and enter via Big Oak Flat. This entrance is closed at night.

Back to Basics

Whether you're a first-time national park traveler or a seasoned pro, here are a few things you need to know about visiting Yosemite.

1 Plan ahead.

Starting in 2020, Yosemite began implementing peak-hours reservations late-May through September. At the time of publication, the 2023 reservation system had not yet been announced but expect to need an advance reservation to enter the park Summer 2023. Check nps.gov/yose for announcements.

2 Get your pass.

In addition to your peak-hours reservation, you'll need to pay a park entrance fee. You can buy a $35, 7-day pass at a park entrance station, or use your America the Beautiful or other interagency annual pass to get into the national park.

3 Catch a ride.

Skip the headache of circling for parking spots multiple times a day and take the Yosemite Valley Shuttle. Park in the lot at Yosemite or Curry villages or Yosemite Falls and then explore for the day by shuttle. Turn to pages 66 and 84 to learn how to get to the park by public transportation.

4 Be bear aware.

Yosemite is home to hundreds of black bears so it's important to properly store your food to make sure you don't have an unwanted visitor. During the day, you can store food and other scented items in a locked car or RV with the windows rolled up. At night, you must store these items in a food locker located in your campground or a parking lot. Bear spray is prohibited in the park.

Clouds Rest
(Grant Ordelheide)

5

Drink up!

Drinking plenty of water is key to staying hydrated and warding off the effects of hiking at high elevation. Bring at least two liters of water per person with you when you hit the trails.

6

Hike smart.

Afternoon thunderstorms are common in Yosemite in the summer months and lightning can pose a real danger to hikers. Hike in the morning and plan to be back at the trailhead by early afternoon. If you hear thunder or see dark clouds building, turn back immediately.

7

Lace up.

Leave the flip-flops for the pool. Closed-toed shoes with good tread like hiking boots or tennis shoes will protect your feet and give you a good grip on slippery or uneven trails in the park.

8

Keep it beautiful.

With 3.3 million visitors in 2021, every piece of trash adds up. Skip the plastic water bottle and refill your reusable at the park's filtered filling stations. Pack out everything you pack in when you hit the trails. Yes, that means everything, including TP.

9

Stay on the trail.

Walking off-trail damages plants, erodes the landscape and can lead to dangerous drop-offs. Stick to the park's 750 miles of trails.

10

Know your Fido 411.

Dogs are only allowed on paved trails and on leash in campgrounds and parking lots. While Yosemite Valley's more than 12 miles of paved bike path give plenty of opportunities to go on walks with your furry friend, it's better to leave them at home if you want to explore more of the park than the roads. Never leave your pet in the car as temperatures can become dangerous, even on a mild day.

11

Only you can prevent forest fires.

Did you know that 95% of California's wildfires are caused by human activity?* Be sure to check for fire bans before you go camping and adhere to them. S'mores taste just as good cooked on the camp stove as they do over the fire, promise.

*California Department of Forestry and Protection

Where to Stay?

Wawona Hotel
(Courtesy Yosemite Hospitality)

The park has three hotels: The Ahwahnee, Wawona Hotel and Yosemite Valley Lodge. A variety of cabins, canvas-tent cabins and camping shelters can be found at Curry Village, Housekeeping Camp and White Wolf and Tuolumne Meadows lodges. Backcountry travelers can stay in the High Sierra Camps or the Glacier Point Ski Hut. Reservations open for lodging in the park at travelyosemite.com 366 days in advance and fill quickly. Many visitors stay in towns near the park where it's easier to find lodging like Oakhurst, Mariposa, Groveland and Sonora.

In 2023, campers will find 12 campgrounds in the park. It's best to make advance reservations (see pg. 18). Camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds, or in the backcountry with a permit.

Find everything you need to know at myyosemitepark.com/where-to-stay-camp-eat/.

A Weekend in Yosemite

Short on time? You can still have an incredible vacation in the park, even if you only have 48 hours. Here's the plan...

By Mikaela Ruland

DAY ONE

8:30 a.m.

Stroll Amongst Giants at Mariposa Grove ▸

There's an undeniable sense of wonder that results from walking through an ancient forest of towering giant sequoias. Fifteen minutes from the Wawona Hotel, you'll find yourself transported as you experience the park's biggest sequoia grove. Park at the Mariposa Grove Welcome Plaza located at the South Entrance and hop on a free shuttle which will bring you to the Lower Grove where you can walk the Grizzly Giant Loop Trail, a 2-mile path that circles the trees.

◂ 12:30 p.m.

Cool Down on Mist Trail

If you want to escape the crowds, early morning is the best time to hike the park's famous Mist Trail to Vernal and Nevada falls. But if you don't mind sharing the trail with new friends, a warm spring afternoon is also a great time to cool off in the falls' mist. Hike 2.4 miles roundtrip to reach the top of 317-foot Vernal Fall. The trail continues to Nevada Fall, which increases the roundtrip mileage to 5.4. If you're starting later in the day, it's best to turn around at Vernal Fall.

◂ 3:30 p.m.

Visit the Ansel Adams Gallery

Next door to the Valley Visitor Center, you'll find the Ansel Adams Gallery, featuring the work of renowned photographer and conservationist Ansel Adams who photographed the park extensively. The gallery hosts photography classes and walks in Yosemite Valley each week. Reserve your spot in advance at anseladams.com/photography-education/.

◂ 6 p.m.

Eat Dinner at the Pizza Deck

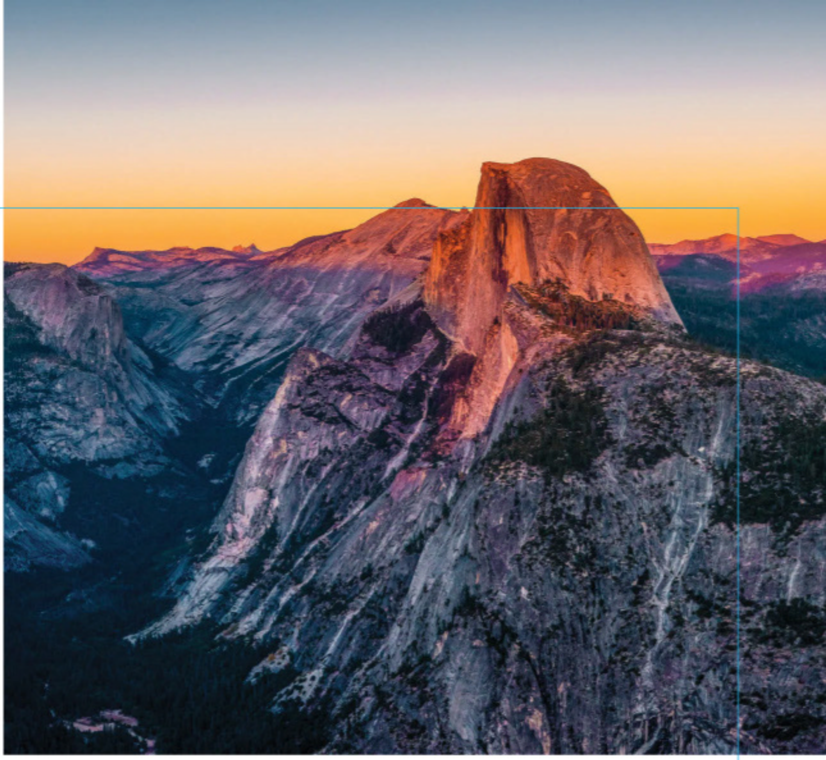
Eating hand-tossed pizza on an outdoor deck while gazing up at Half Dome is a Yosemite tradition you just can't miss. Head to Curry Village and grab a table where you can order whole pizzas with Yosemite themed names. The El Capitan is your traditional meat and veggie combo, while the Firefall features chicken, bacon, sriracha and ranch. Save room for the s'mores pizza, which is just as decadent as it sounds.

DAY TWO

7 a.m.

Hike Glacier Point ►

Absolutely stunning views of Half Dome and other Yosemite rock formations and peaks surround you at Glacier Point. While you could drive up to take in the view, we like taking the Hiker's Bus up to Glacier Point and then hiking down to the valley on Four Mile Trail. Along the 4.8-mile (one way) route, you'll enjoy amazing views to the valley bottom.



◄ 1 p.m.

Drive Tioga Road and Picnic at Tenaya Beach

Located off Tioga Road, Tenaya Lake is impossible to miss as you drive along this gorgeous pass. The 150-acre snowmelt-fed lake offers a great place to picnic on sunny, white-sand beaches. The drive from Yosemite Valley to Tenaya Lake takes more than an hour, so plan accordingly. Head to the sand to enjoy lunch while listening to the sound of the waves lap on the shore. If you still have energy, it's well worth it to follow the 1-mile path around the lake's south side to a shoreline away from the crowds.

6 p.m.

Dine at the Ahwahnee Hotel ►

Opened in 1927, the Ahwahnee Hotel is one of Yosemite's more legendary structures. Even if you aren't staying in the hotel, a meal in the historic dining room complete with 34-foot-high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows is well worth it. Reservations are required for dinner and guests are expected to dress the part. Long pants, dresses or skirts are required, and collared shirts or blouses must be worn.

PHOTOS: Mariposa Grove, Mist Trail (Grant Ordelheide), Ansel Adams portrait (WikiPD), Pizza Deck, Half Dome sunset view from Glacier Point, Tenaya Beach (Grant Ordelheide), The Ahwahnee Hotel Dining Room (Courtesy Yosemite Hospitality)

Choose YOUR Hike

View of Half Dome from North Dome (Grant Ordelheide)

Peaceful River Pounding Waterfall Mountain Lake Views from Above
Away from Crowds DIFFICULTY: ● Easy ■ Moderate ◆ Difficult

Wapama Falls

●

Head to the Hetch Hetchy area to catch this 1,400-foot cascade careening over enormous boulders into the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Hike 2.5 miles (one-way) to the footbridge crossing the falls. Go in late spring to see the falls at their most impressive, but be careful of high water on the bridge.

May Lake

●

From the trailhead on Tioga Road, you're only 1.3 miles from dipping a toe in idyllic May Lake, making this trip a great one for kids. And if the view at the lake energizes you for more, continue on to the top of 10,850-foot Mt. Hoffman for a more difficult, 5.4-mile roundtrip hike.

Taft Point

●

For vertigo-inducing views of Yosemite Valley, the 2.2-mile Taft Point Trail is a must. This easy hike that starts off Glacier Point Road only gains 200 feet in elevation, but keep children close as there are steep drop-offs without guardrails at the end of the hike. The first overlook you'll reach at Taft Point has a small fence which is a great choice for those who are afraid of heights. Peer down into Yosemite Valley and take in the sweeping views of the surrounding mountains. The next overlook has no fence or railing and is the place for the iconic shot you've seen on Instagram.

North Dome

■

Bag a peak without all the work of Half Dome on this moderate, 5-mile roundtrip to the top of 7,543-foot North Dome. From the summit perch, you'll have a close look at Half Dome, Clouds Rest and Yosemite Valley.

Valley Loop Trail

■

See all of the Yosemite Valley highlights—but fewer crowds—on this loop with views of El Capitan, Yosemite Falls, Sentinel Rock, Bridalveil Fall and the Merced River. Start the complete 11.5-mile loop at Lower Yosemite Fall and go in either direction. For the 7.2-mile half loop, take the spur trail to cross the Merced River at El Capitan Bridge.

Yosemite Falls

◆

The 7.2-mile roundtrip trek to the top of Yosemite Falls is strenuous, but well worth the 2,700 feet of elevation gain when you see the views of Yosemite Valley from the top. A stunning vista of North America's tallest waterfall can be found near the road by bus stop #6, but to really experience it, hike the trail to its top. The best view of the waterfall from the trail is 1.5 miles in.

Half Dome

◆

A Yosemite rite of passage for experienced hikers, the 14-or-16-mile, roundtrip up the iconic 8,839-foot granite peak is a physical and mental challenge. You need a permit to hike it. Near the top, you'll have to conquer a very steep, exposed 400-foot section laced with metal cables.

Cathedral Lakes

◆

One glance at the rhino-horn summit of 10,912-foot Cathedral Peak reflected in Upper Cathedral Lake, and you'll know hoofing it up this high-altitude Tuolumne Meadows trail was worth it. The round trip is 7 miles to either Upper or Lower Cathedral Lake and 8 miles for both.

For two more great Yosemite hikes, Mist Trail and Four Mile Trail, turn to pages 12-13.

Leave No Trace

Before you hit the trail, become familiar with how to recreate responsibly.

1 PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE

Research trails, campsites and weather ahead of time and plan and pack accordingly. Always carry plenty of water, snacks and layers.

2 TREAD LIGTLY

Stay on trails to help concentrate foot traffic and limit your impact on plants in the park.

3 DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Pack out everything you bring in, including fruit peels and toilet paper. Throw all your trash in garbage cans at the end of your hike.

4 LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Take nothing but pictures. Leave rocks, fossils , flowers and archaeological artifacts for others to enjoy.

5 MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Check fire restrictions in the area you're visiting. Only light a fire in a well-built fire ring and make sure the fire is completely out before leaving or going to bed.

6 RESPECT WILDLIFE

Never feed wildlife and view them from a respectful distance. Stay at least 50 feet away from small animals like squirrels and birds and 100 feet from larger animals like bears and bighorn sheep.

7 WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATION

Bring your own water bottle and fill it at the park's fillling stations.

8 BE CONSIDERATE

Be mindful of how you're impacting other visitors' experiences. Avoid playing loud music or shouting.

TOUR
Like A Local

By Mikaela Ruland

Wish you had your own guide while touring Yosemite? Download the GyPSy Guide App.

“We create that experience for people who want to remain independent and self-tour and still enjoy the entertainment of a guided tour,” says Rick Bulich, founder of GyPSy Guide.

The app automatically plays a guided commentary as you drive, based on your location. The narration includes behind-the-scenes stories, explaining the spectacular geology and fascinating characters associated with Yosemite’s past and present, along with local tips with directions. It tells you about sights and side trips coming up, so you can decide whether you want to stop at places like where Capitan Kirk from *Star Trek V* free-climbed El Capitan.

Because the app uses your phone’s GPS signal, not cell towers, no cell network or WiFi is required while touring.

Download driving tours for Yosemite, Big Sur, Hwy. 1 and more at GyPSyGuide.com.

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Did Someone Say S'mores?

Make your 2023 camping plans at one of Yosemite's 12 open campgrounds with this guide.

By Mikaela Ruland

Lower Pines Campground (Grant Ordelheide)

It's hard to beat the convenience and ambiance of camping inside Yosemite, but scoring a coveted reservation can be a challenge. Starting in 2022, reservations are required for all campgrounds inside the park April through September. Reservations open on recreation.gov on the 15th of each month for the one month block of dates starting four months in the future. For example, if you want to camp between July 15 and August 14, reservations open on March 15. Reservations open at 7 a.m. PT and tend to sell out immediately. For your best shot at getting a reservation, create an account on recreation.gov ahead of time and use a computer with fast WiFi. Camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds, or in the backcountry with a permit.

Use our campground guide to decide where you want to stay before the reservation window opens.

🚐 RV-Friendly 🚽 Has a Dump Station 🚰 Potable Water Available 24/7 Year-Round ♿ Accessible Sites

Yosemite Valley Campgrounds

North Pines Campground

🚐 🚰 ♿

This campground is one of two in the park that can accommodate RVs up to 40 feet in length at a few of its sites. Be sure to check your site's specs before booking. This quiet campground has great views and is open March through October.

Upper Pines Campground

🚐 🚽 🚰 24/7 ♿

Offering the only dump station in the valley, this campground is open year-round. Tall pine trees and views of Half Dome make this a stunning location.

Lower Pines Campground

🚐 🚰 ♿

This campground is one of two in the park that can accommodate RVs up to 40 feet in length at a few of its sites. Be sure to check your site's specs before booking. This campground is located along the Merced River and is beautiful in the fall. It's open April through October.

Camp 4

🚰 24/7

All of Camp 4's sites are walk-in, meaning you'll need to be prepared to carry your gear from your car to your campsite. Known for attracting rock climbers, this year-round campground is near Yosemite Falls. In 2022, summer reservations were only available one day in advance via a lottery. Check nps.gov/yose for information on how reservations can be made in 2023.

Southern Campgrounds

Wawona Campground

🚐 🚽 🚰 24/7 ♿

This year-round campground is located on Wawona Road close to the Mariposa Grove. First-come, first served sites are only available October through April. The campground is situated along the South Fork Merced River, making it very peaceful.

Bridalveil Creek Campground

🚐 🚰

Located along Glacier Point Road, this campground sits at 7,200 feet in elevation and is open July through September most years. It was closed for construction 2021-22, but is expected to re-open in 2023.

Northern Campgrounds

Hodgdon Meadow Campground

🚐 🚰 24/7

Find this campground along Big Oak Flat Road, sitting at 4,900 feet in elevation. Fires and droughts have affected trees in this area, so it's a good place to camp if you want full sun. First-come, first-served sites are available mid-October through mid-April.

Crane Flat Campground

🚐 🚰 ♿

With a July to mid-October season, this campground is located along Big Oak Flat Road and sits at 6,200 feet in elevation. It was closed in 2022, but is expected to re-open in 2023. This campground is situated conveniently to explore both Yosemite Valley and Tioga Road.

Tamarack Flat

♿

RVs aren't allowed at this primitive campground, tucked in the pines three miles off Tioga Road. It's a great place to get a quiet respite but still be less than an hour from Yosemite Valley. Water is only available from Tamarack Creek, so must be filtered, boiled or treated. It's open late-June through mid-October.

White Wolf Campground

🚐 🚰

Located along Tioga Road, this 8,000-foot in elevation campground in the trees can accommodate RVs up to 27 feet and trailers up to 24 feet. Open July to September, this small, quiet campground will let you feel worlds away from it all.

Yosemite Creek

♿

You'll need to take a rough dirt road to access this campground, but the payoff is that most sites are close to the serene Yosemite Creek. The creek is the only water source, so water must be filtered, boiled or treated. It's open mid-July through mid-September.

Porcupine Flat

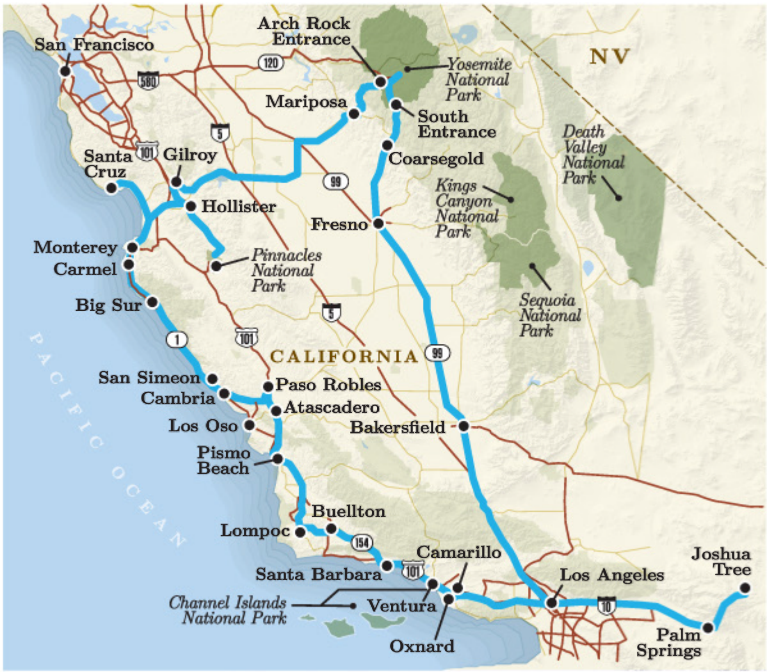
♿

One of the highest elevation campgrounds in Yosemite, Porcupine Flat sits at 8,100 feet in elevation, making it cooler than much of the rest of the park. Water is only available from Porcupine Creek, so must be filtered, boiled or treated. It was closed in 2022, but is expected to re-open in 2023 with a season of mid-July through early October.

Best of the Coast

California coast along Highway 1
(Getty Images)

Discover the hidden gems of California's beautiful—and sometimes rugged—central coast.


San Francisco
Arch Rock Entrance
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Yosemite National Park
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Santa Cruz
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Gilroy
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Death Valley National Park
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Kings Canyon National Park
Hollister
Fresno
Monterey
Carmel
Pinnacles National Park
Big Sur
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Sequoia National Park
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101
CALIFORNIA
99
PACIFIC OCEAN
San Simeon
Cambria
Paso Robles
Atascadero
Los Oso
Bakersfield
Pismo Beach
Buellton
Lompoc
154
Camarillo
Joshua Tree
Santa Barbara
101
Los Angeles
Channel Islands National Park
Ventura
10
Palm Springs
Oxnard

Palm tree lined streets. Glittering beaches. Surfboards leaning against fences. It's the classic vision of coastal California you'd expect from a road trip titled, "Best of the Coast." But as you drive from the Mojave desert, through Los Angeles, and along the western shores of the United States, you'll discover there's so much more to California than just Hollywood glam and beach culture.

Start in the austere and beautiful Mojave Desert in Joshua Tree National Park. As you make your way to Yosemite, head through L.A., towards the coast, then north to the towns of Ventura and Oxnard where you can board a ferry to one of our country's most interesting national parks: Channel Islands.

You'll find surprising twists in all the charming towns along the way. Discover 18th century history in Santa Barbara and Lompoc. Curious animals you wouldn't associate with California like emus, zebras and elephant seals can be found in Buellton and San Simeon. Visit a town obsessed with clams in Pismo Beach and find enough garlic to think the locale has a vampire problem in Gilroy. Before heading to Yosemite, hike through the central coast's only grove of redwoods near Santa Cruz and one of our newest national parks: Pinnacles.

Along the way, you'll experience all the picture-perfect beaches, surf culture and vineyards your heart desires, with plenty of palm trees thrown in for good measure.

Turn the page to find the best hidden gems of California's central coast that prove there's more to this part of the country than you could have ever imagined.

PHOTOS: Old Mission Santa Barbara (Photo by Jay Sinclair / Courtesy of Visit Santa Barbara), Channel Islands National Park (Getty Images)

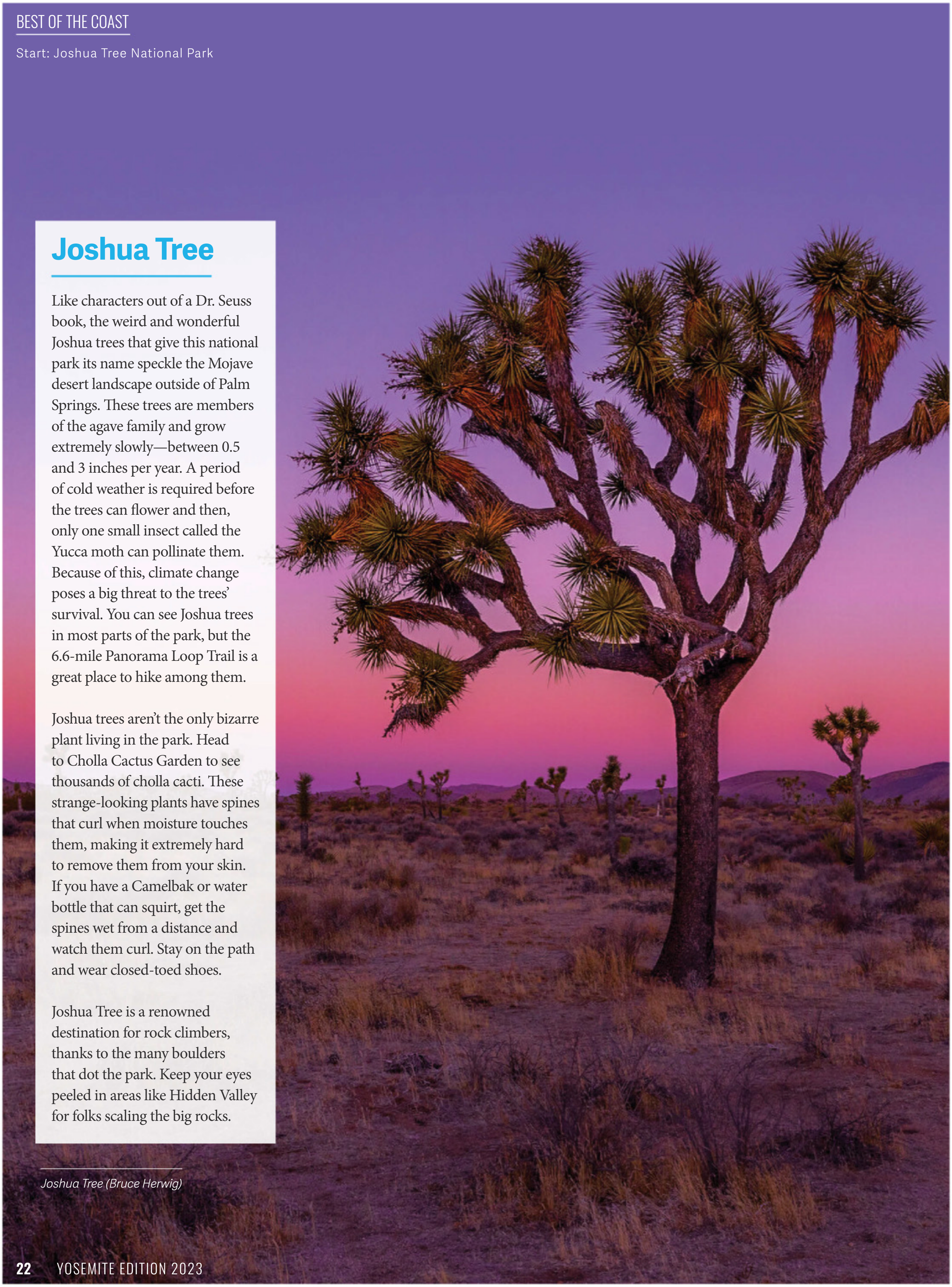
Start: Joshua Tree National Park

Joshua Tree

Like characters out of a Dr. Seuss book, the weird and wonderful Joshua trees that give this national park its name speckle the Mojave desert landscape outside of Palm Springs. These trees are members of the agave family and grow extremely slowly—between 0.5 and 3 inches per year. A period of cold weather is required before the trees can flower and then, only one small insect called the Yucca moth can pollinate them. Because of this, climate change poses a big threat to the trees' survival. You can see Joshua trees in most parts of the park, but the 6.6-mile Panorama Loop Trail is a great place to hike among them.

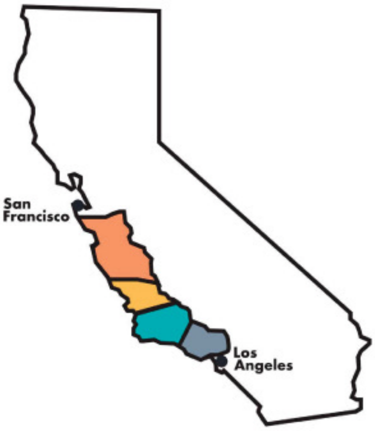
Joshua trees aren't the only bizarre plant living in the park. Head to Cholla Cactus Garden to see thousands of cholla cacti. These strange-looking plants have spines that curl when moisture touches them, making it extremely hard to remove them from your skin. If you have a Camelbak or water bottle that can squirt, get the spines wet from a distance and watch them curl. Stay on the path and wear closed-toed shoes.

Joshua Tree is a renowned destination for rock climbers, thanks to the many boulders that dot the park. Keep your eyes peeled in areas like Hidden Valley for folks scaling the big rocks.



Joshua Tree (Bruce Herwig)

CENTRAL COAST
CALIFORNIA
it's about time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Time to ditch your feed. Time to explore 350 miles of the world's most vibrant and stunning coastline. Free, open and alluring. All the Central Coast is asking you to do is one thing: take the time. If you take the time, it will give you all the time you need.
And it's worth every second.

Monterey Bay, **San Luis Obispo**, **Santa Barbara**, and **Ventura** regions deliver a memorable road trip along Highways 1 and 101.

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California

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Uncrowded Paradise

You'll find wide open spaces, beauty and sea-swept beaches in towns like Camarillo, Oxnard, Ventura and Port Hueneme along California's undiscovered coast.

By Tori Peglar

① Ventura Botanical Gardens

A few minutes walk from downtown Ventura, go on a breathtaking hike lined with flowers and plants from five Mediterranean climate zones. The gardens offer sweeping views of the coastline and Channel Islands National Park.

Park in the lot behind the San Buenaventura City Hall next to the trailhead and pay the day-use fee at Merewether Welcome Center. Fridays are free, as are children under 18.

② San Buenaventura State Park Beach and Historic Pier

Two miles of pristine beach await you in Ventura, giving you plenty of room to spread out and relax. Rent bikes there to ride trails to nearby beaches, enjoy a microbrew on the pier at Madewest Brewing Co. or walk to the end of Ventura's historic pier, originally built in 1872, to watch a gorgeous sunset.

Stroll downtown Ventura lined with historic buildings filled with boutiques and unique restaurants. Outdoor retailer Patagonia is based here, and you'll find its store on West Santa Clara Street.

Ventura Botanical Gardens (Courtesy Ventura County Coast)

③ Camarillo Premium Outlets

These outlet stores include fashion giants like Armani and Prada, as well as activewear retailers like Nike, The North Face, lululemon and Columbia Factory Store. Afterwards, head to the Hill Canyon Trailhead to hike or bike Hawk Canyon, a 3.6-mile, one-way trail in Camarillo that's great for beginning mountain bikers or those who want to take an easy hike that offers mountain views and shady areas.

④ Channel Islands National Park

This park is home to eight unique mammal species, including the curious island fox. Depending on which island you visit, you'll catch your Island Packers boat in Oxnard at the Channel Islands Harbor or the Ventura Harbor Village in Ventura. *See more on pg. 26.*

⑤ Silver Strand Beach

This gorgeous, uncrowded mile-long stretch of white sand beach in Oxnard is a great place to watch surfers ride the waves at The Jetty and La Janelle Jetty.

Head to Channel Islands Harbor where you can rent a kayak and paddle along the beach toward La Janelle Jetty. The harbor is also home to Channel Islands Maritime Museum, seafood restaurants and a Sunday farmers market.

⑥ Port Hueneme Beach Park

A Chumash Indian word meaning "resting place," Port Hueneme Beach Park feels away from it all with its long pier to stroll on, as well as picnic areas and volleyball nets. Take the promenade trail that connects the pier to the Port Hueneme Lighthouse.

Learn more at VenturaCountyCoast.com/roadtrip.

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CAMARILLO
OXNARD
VENTURA
PORT HUENEME

Wild Islands

Take a day to explore the "American Galapagos," otherwise known as Channel Islands National Park.

By Tori Peglar

Anacapa Island in Channel Islands National Park (Mirza Todorovich)

Get an exotic experience without ever leaving California. Home to five islands, Channel Islands National Park offers solitude and beauty. While no one lives on the islands today, the Chumash people inhabited the area for thousands of years, crafting tomols (plank canoes) to navigate between islands.

Today, it takes between 1-4 hours via an Island Packers ferry from Oxnard or Ventura Harbor Village to reach the islands. The closest islands, Anacapa and Santa Cruz, are one-hour ferry rides. Along the way, your captain may point out blue and humpback whales during the summer season.

Stretching five miles, Anacapa Island is 14 miles from Ventura. It's a popular spot for harbor seals and California sea lions to rest and breed. And the island's iconic lighthouse, first lit in 1932, was the last permanent lighthouse built on the West Coast.

Santa Cruz Island is a one-hour ferry ride from Ventura Harbor Village to Scorpion Anchorage. The island is home to a visitor center, picnic tables and the best weather of all the islands. You can do guided snorkel and kayaking tours with the park-authorized Channel Islands Adventure Co. here.

The island spans more than 96 square miles, making it California's largest island. It's home to Painted Cave, one of the world's largest and deepest sea caves. About 1,200 Chumash residents inhabited 10 villages before contact with Europeans led to outbreaks of disease and forced removal from the island. It was later settled by European descendants who built ranches and brought cattle there.

Santa Rosa is the second largest island in California at approximately 53,000 acres. It is 40 nautical miles from Ventura. Some of its inhabitants date back to the Pleistocene era like the Santa Rosa Island subspecies of the Torrey pine, one of the rarest pines in the world.

The smallest island is Santa Barbara, which is only one square mile. Snorkel in Landing Cove or look for California sea lions, harbor seals and northern elephant seals.

The farthest island is San Miguel Island, a former bombing range, where more than 30,000 seals and sea lions give birth and lounge on the island's 27 miles of coastline. Visitors must be accompanied by park staff beyond the ranger station. It's a four-hour ferry ride one way to get to San Miguel.

Learn more at nps.gov/chis.

Waterfront Fun

By Mikaela Ruland

Ventura Harbor Village is one of only two places where you can board an Island Packers boat to get to Channel Islands National Park. Tucked along a harbor filled with beautiful boats and lined with flowers, it's also home to the Channel Islands Visitor Center where you can learn more about the park and prepare for your visit. There's even a live tide pool on-site to explore as well as a viewing tower to catch sight of the park in the distance.

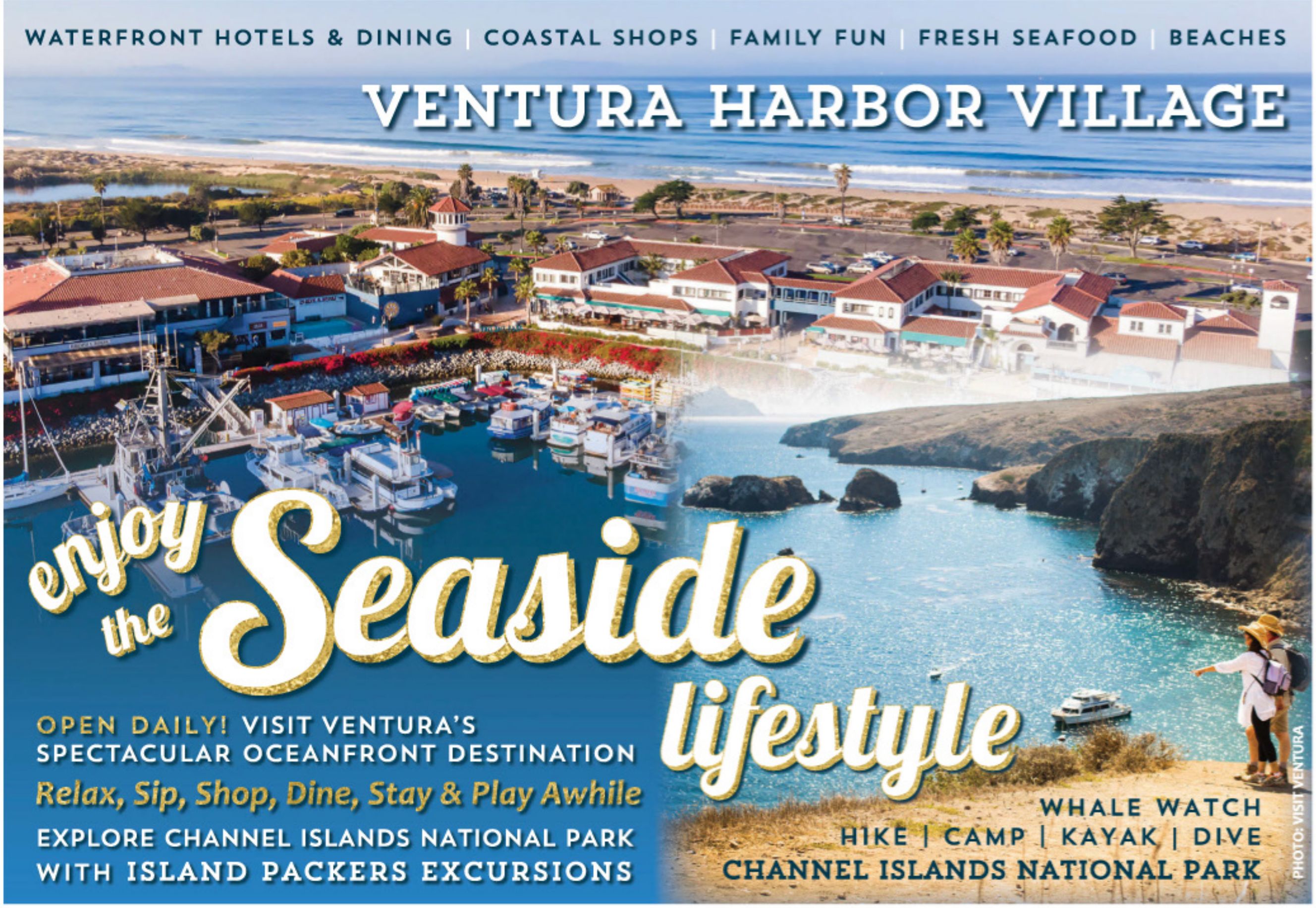
Ventura Harbor Village is so much more than just a hopping off point, however. It's a great place to relax and unwind. You'll find complimentary parking and two hotels, Four Points by Sheraton and the Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Ventura Harbor, making it easy to spend the weekend. Rent a pedal boat shaped like a swan, duck or dragon to explore the harbor. You can also rent kayaks and electric boats. If you're craving some sunbathing or sand castle building, spend the morning at one of the picturesque beaches across the street.

When it's time for lunch, head to one of the restaurants in the village. Andria's Seafood Restaurant & Market is famous for its fish and chips and Brophy Bros. Restaurant & Clam Bar is the place to go for fresh oysters by the dozen. For dessert, check out the creative masterpieces from Coastal Cone. They have fish shaped ice cream cones, sundaes that look like a narwhal and Dole Whip.

Spend the afternoon perusing the coastal boutiques and art galleries. You'll find jewelry, pottery, clothing, artisan bath products, chocolate and more as you stroll.

When evening rolls around, grab a spot at Deep Sea Wine Tasting Room's patio to enjoy a glass of wine or a tasting flight from this local winery and watch the sunset.

Learn more at VenturaHarborVillage.com.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WHALE WATCH
HIKE | CAMP | KAYAK | DIVE
CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
PHOTO: VISIT VENTURA

Seaside Escape

Nestled on California's stunning Hwy. 101, Santa Barbara offers incredible outdoor recreation, inventive food and drinks and stunning architecture for a perfect weekend of exploration.

By Mikaela Ruland

Start your day with a hike to beautiful **Inspiration Point**. This 3.5-mile roundtrip adventure brings you to an overlook with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and Channel Islands National Park, the city of Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez mountains to the east. Next stop, the beach. If you're traveling with your dog, **Arroyo Burro** is the place to be, with a self-service dog-wash in the parking lot. For surfing or boogie boarding, head to **Leadbetter Beach**. And, if you just want to sunbathe and get lost in a book, head to **Butterfly Beach**.

The stunning architecture and history of **Old Mission Santa Barbara** can't be missed. Built in 1786 by Spanish Franciscans, this beautiful building is still an active church. Stop by the **A.C. Postel Memorial Rose Garden** across the street to see more than 1,500 rose bushes in bloom. It's a great spot for a picnic.

Head to Santa Barbara's waterfront to really get a taste of this seaside town. Get on the water at the harbor with a whale-watching excursion with **Condor Express** or a stand-up paddleboard lesson from **Paddle Sports Center**.

On Saturday mornings, the **Fishermen's Market** is a must-stop. Local fishermen sell the day's catch to restaurants and individuals alike. There's even a fillet station where an attendant will prepare your fresh catch. Jump on the **Lil' Toot water taxi** and venture across the harbor to **Stearns Wharf** to sample locally caught seafood at **Santa Barbara Shellfish Co.** before strolling the shops along the wharf.

Explore the **State Street Promenade**, a 10-block pedestrian walkway which can be found between Sola and Gutierrez streets. Visit on Thursdays from 3-7 p.m. for a market filled with local artisans and temporary art installations. Afterwards, visit California's oldest operating theater, the **Lobero**, for their jazz performances.

Santa Barbara isn't the only charming town in this area. Check out three of its sister neighborhoods. **Montecito** is the destination for glamorous shopping, fine dining like **Lucky's Steakhouse**, and amazing hiking. **Goleta** is home to University of California Santa Barbara and a huge craft beverage scene. Find local craft beers at **M. Special Taproom** or **Captain Fatty's**, hard cider at **Santa Barbara Cider Co.**, and local wine at **SAMsARA Winery**. **Summerland** is a low-key beach town with excellent antiquing and world-class horseback riding. Book a ride with **Los Padres Outfitters** to trot down a glittering beach.

Learn more at SantaBarbaraCA.com

PHOTOS: Dog walking at Miramar Beach in Montecito, Old Mission Santa Barbara, Captain Fatty's (All photos by Blake Bronstad / Courtesy of Visit Santa Barbara)

Beautiful Buellton

By Tori Peglar

Head inland for a stunning drive to Buellton in the heart of the San Ynez Valley for off-the-beaten-path experiences that are affordable.

See Buellton and the surrounding Sta. Rita Hills on a one-hour trail ride with Santa Ynez Valley Horseback Rides. It's a great way for people ages 6 and up to be outside and see a gorgeous corner of the central coast. Look for wildlife and take in the views as you cross the Santa Ynez River. Or, pick blueberries at the family-owned, 1,000-acre Santa Barbara Blueberries at Restoration Oaks Ranch. You'll find these juicy treats in season in June and July, and raspberries in season August through October.

For more family-friendly fun, feed emus and ostriches at OstrichLand USA. You can even buy fresh ostrich eggs at the gift store on-site. Or, walk through the Santa Ynez Valley Botanic Garden at RiverView Park. Then eat locally grown food and wood-fired pizza at the wonderfully creative Industrial Eats Restaurant & Butcher Shop.

Discover hip vintage Airstreams, luxury safari tents, wine cottages with grapevines growing between backyards and national park-themed cabins offering an amazing lodging experience at Flying Flags RV Resort & Camping. There are also more than 300 RV spots, two outdoor pools and jacuzzis.

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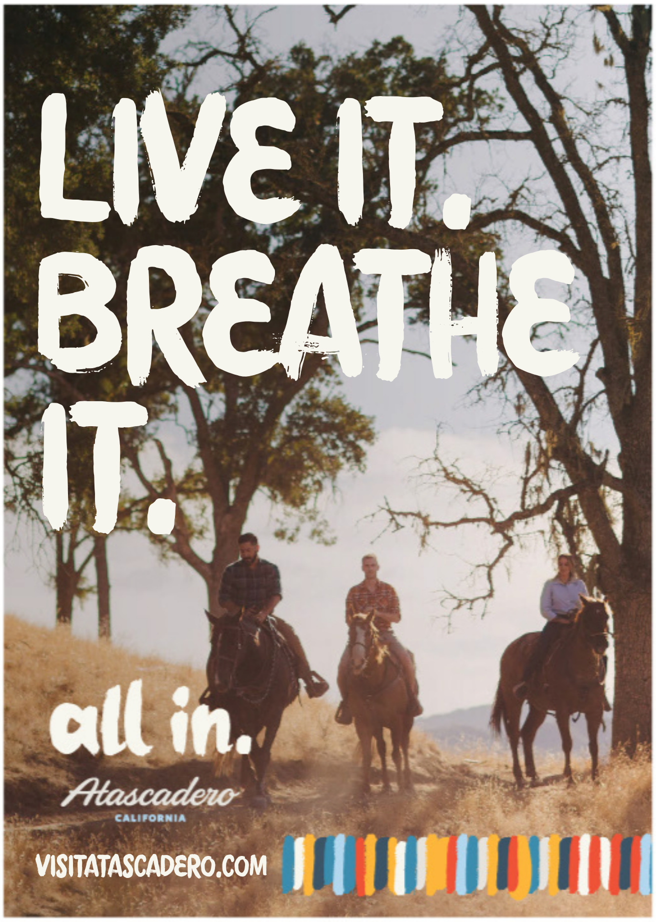
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Lompoc's Top 5

Pronounced "Lom-poke," this scenic valley town offers a ton to see and do year-round.

By Tori Peglar

1 Explore a Mission

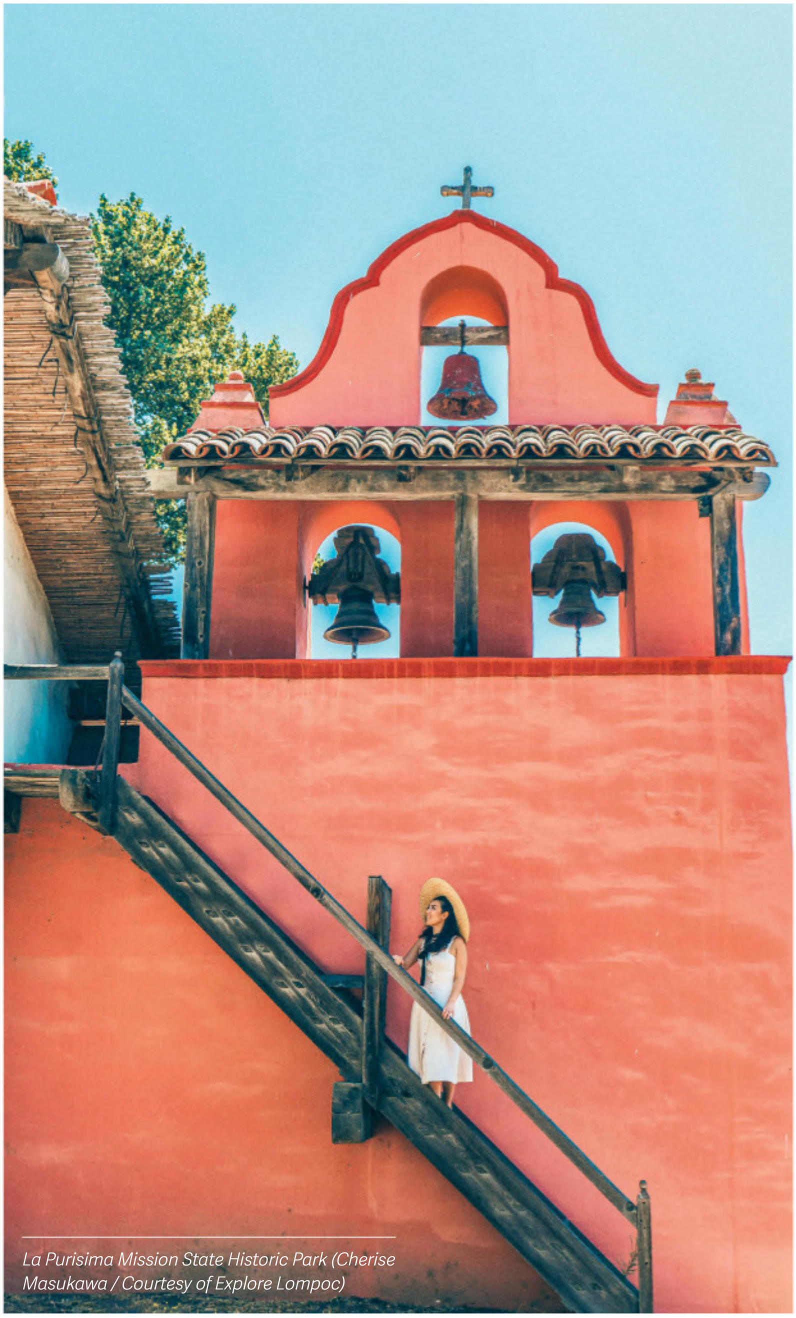
Founded in 1787, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park is the most extensively restored mission of the 21 in California. Explore the restored buildings, visitor center exhibits and 25 miles of trails in this 2,000-acre park.

2 See Big Art

In Old Town Lompoc, 40 enormous murals appear on street corners, in alley ways and on sides of buildings, making a vibrant outdoor art gallery that you can stroll. Download the art mural walking tour guide at ExploreLompoc.com or stop by the Lompoc Valley Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau for a mural map.

3 Sip Award-Winning Wines

Check out the Lompoc Wine Ghetto and the Sta. Rita Hills. Featuring wineries, tasting rooms and production facilities located off Pacific Coast Hwy. 1 and 12th Street, the Wine Ghetto has 20 boutique tasting rooms. It's easy to visit a number of them and sample area wines. Nearby in the Sta. Rita Hills, you'll find award-winning wines and gorgeous vineyard vistas perfect for picnicking.



La Purisima Mission State Historic Park (Cherise Masukawa / Courtesy of Explore Lompoc)

4 Stroll a Secluded Beach

Just 30 minutes from downtown Lompoc, remote Jalama Beach is a popular surfing and kite-surfing destination. It's a great spot to stroll the sand and admire beach rocks, but the water can be rough for swimming. Grab a picnic table and enjoy a famous Jalama Burger from Beach Grill there.

5 Play a Championship Course

La Purisima Golf Course was designed by world-renowned architect Robert Muir Graves. This 18-hole course has hosted pro tournaments from the PGA, LPGA and Senior PGA circuits. With spectacular vistas, it was recognized by *Golf Magazine* as part of the "Top 100 Public Courses in America."

Learn more at ExploreLompoc.com.

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Pismo Beach (Courtesy Experience Pismo Beach)

California Dreamin'

Experience the best of the Golden State's beach culture in Pismo Beach.

By Tori Peglar

When you arrive at this laid-back destination, you'll feel as if you've landed in the California beach town you've always fantasized about.

With its vibrant downtown lined with outdoor dining, a variety of lodging and great surf shops, park your car and start experiencing the California coastal culture you've seen in the movies. Don't miss walking on its iconic Pismo Pier Plaza with its Instagram-worthy neon sign, whale-themed playground and series of slides that lead down to the sand. You'll also discover newly placed vintage Airstream trailers that house a restaurant, visitor information and an ocean sports shop.

On your way to the pier, check out Pismo's newest beachfront hotel, Vespera on Ocean, a Marriott Autograph Hotel. It offers oceanfront dining and upscale beach-style rooms. Inn at the Pier, a craftsman-style hotel with boutique rooms, is also a newcomer to the scene. If you're looking for beachside RV camping without wind, head to Pismo Coast Village RV Resort. It's located on 26 acres with a heated pool and within walking distance to town.

This iconic beach town offers more than just a laid-back vibe. It sits next to 27 wineries in the Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande Valley wine regions.

It's home to a three-day party celebrating clams and their comeback that attracts 15,000 people every year. Before surfing became vogue and the clams were overharvested, Pismo Beach was known as the "clam capital of the world."

Today, the Pismo Beach Clam Festival in October features live music, food trucks, a local clam chowder contest and wine walk. If you miss the festival, you can still celebrate Pismo's heritage at the Splash Café, known for its excellent year-round clam chowder.

Thousands of monarch butterflies descend on Pismo Beach each year. Between late October and February, stop by the Pismo Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove, a half mile south of town just off Hwy. 1. It's one of the largest monarch butterfly colonies in North America.

Learn more at ExperiencePismoBeach.com.

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Toast to the distinct character of this lively seaside community, located only a short distance from some of California's finest wineries. Book your stay today and make Pismo Beach your Wine and Waves destination.

Pismo Beach

ExperiencePismoBeach.com

Grapes of Robles

Dive into California's laidback wine and outdoor scene.

By Tori Peglar

Girl's trip barrel tasting at CASS Winery
(Courtesy of Travel Paso and CASS Winery)

Driving east from Hwy. 1, you'll pass gorgeous rolling hills before you get a hint of what's to come in the charming town of Paso Robles: green vines racing up and down the hillsides. You'll discover more than 200 wineries and vineyards here, plus a friendly, laid-back town just 25 minutes from the beach. Locals will tell you it's a community made up of cowboys and surfers, so the wine is taken seriously but the vibe is laidback.

This means Paso Robles is the place to be whether you're a wine aficionado or a casual traveler wanting to discover the best of authentic California. In addition to wine tasting, the wineries in the Paso Robles area offer tons of varied experiences, including those that are family-friendly. At Castoro Cellars, a certified organic winery, check in at the Whale Rock Disc Golf Course for 18 holes designed for novice and expert disc throwers alike. At Ancient Peaks Winery, opt for the "Zip 'n Sip" VIP tour package where you'll go on a zipline tour featuring six lines that soar over the Margarita Vineyard. Afterwards, a personal wine educator will give you a guided wine tasting.

You can even explore the vineyards on horseback. Head to CASS Winery for a trail ride through dry sandy washes and vineyard-laced hilltops. There's also an evening ride option. If you're looking for a motorized adventure, sign up for a Jeep tour at Halter Ranch, Steinbeck Vineyards or Villa San-Juliette. Or experience Paso Robles' historic roots when you stop by Tobin James Cellars and sip wine at the 1860s Brunswick mahogany bar in what was once a stagecoach stop.

Swing by Tin City, a walkable warehouse district three miles south of downtown made up of modern, metal buildings housing BarrelHouse Brewery, Tin City Cider, Wine Shine Distillery and more than 20 different winery tasting rooms. You'll find lawn games and food trucks serving up Paso Robles-style cowboy barbecue and wood-fired flatbreads.

The Paso Market Walk is also worth your time. It's a mixed-use development that features a number of locally owned businesses, including Finca, a Northern Mexican restaurant that serves traditional and regionally inspired cuisine. The Vreamery Vegan Cheese Shop and Melt Bar is the country's third vegan cheese shop, and Momotaro Ramen serves up fresh Japanese noodle dishes. At Joebella Coffee Roasters, you'll run into just about everyone who works in the wine industry before they head to work in the morning. The Lofts at The Market is here too, offering six private luxury suites.

In the evening, visit Light at Sensorio where nearly 60,000 stemmed-glass spheres light up 15 rolling acres. Created by British artist Bruce Munro, the spheres are lit by fiber optic solar-powered cables. Afterwards, sleep in one of Paso Robles many elegant vineyard-based hotels like Allegretto Vineyard Resort, boutique hotels like The Piccolo in the heart of downtown or the more casual Stables Inn, a 19-room boutique motel three blocks from the historic downtown park.

Learn more at TravelPaso.com.

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Stunning San Simeon

Incredible wildlife, breathtaking scenery and fascinating history await along Hwy. 1.

By Mikaela Ruland

If a stroll along a beach to watch elephant seals in the morning and a drive through a zebra herd to tour a castle in the afternoon sounds like a fantasy, think again. In San Simeon, this is just another day on a perfect weekend getaway.

Located on the southern edge of the Big Sur Scenic Drive, just an hour from the famous Bixby Creek Bridge, San Simeon is a serene and family-friendly small town nestled along the Pacific coast. It's also the home of the stunning Hearst Castle built by the media tycoon William Randolph Hearst from 1919-1947. It fulfilled his lifelong dream to build an estate that echoed those he had seen during his travels in Europe. He left in 1947 because of poor health, with the blueprints of architect Julia Morgan not yet completed.

The castle itself is worthy of an all-day excursion. This incredible 165-room home and its accompanying grounds are covered by 12 different tours. Reservations are reccommended. After you park, you'll ride a shuttle up to the castle where you'll start your tour. A visitor favorite? The pools, which are stunning but are only for viewing, not swimming, and can be visited at the end of every tour.

For an action-packed stroll, head to the Boucher Trail at Piedras Blancas. This flat trail will bring you past one of the most accessible elephant seal colonies in the world where docents from the Friends of the Elephant Seal Society will help you learn more about these massive creatures. The seals are visible on the beach year-round, but January, April and October are the peak times to see them.

Keep walking down the 4-mile roundtrip trail to see the Piedras Blancas Light Station. Year-round tours of the beautiful lighthouse are available, but advanced reservations are recommended.

After a morning spent hiking, head to Hearst Ranch Winery where you can sip on local wines while enjoying views of the bay and the Hearst Castle in the distance. As you drive Hwy. 1 to the winery, keep your eyes peeled for herds of wild zebras and elk mingling, these creatures leftover from Hearst's zoo that was once the largest private zoo in the world.

Don't miss Cavalier Coastal Kitchen in San Simeon for a relaxing meal. It serves fresh seafood, like mouthwatering salmon, with views on the water, and you can end the meal at the firepits, toasting marshmallows for s'mores.

Learn more at VisitSanSimeonCA.com.

PHOTO: Hearst Castle in San Simeon (Christopher Petro for Visit SLOCAL)

Brews, Burgers & Trails

By Mikaela Ruland

In Atascadero you'll find a genuine, no fuss community full of open spaces and incredible food which serves as a perfect hub to the inland area east of California's central coast.

Explore Atascadero's beautiful outdoors to get some fresh air and sunshine to start your day. Hike 2.75 miles to the peak of Cerro Alto for incredible views, or explore the three-mile trail system that follows an oak-lined creek in Three Bridges Oak Preserve. For an exhilarating option, head to the nearby town of Santa Margarita for a zipline tour with Margarita Adventures.

Don't miss the family-friendly Brews and Burgers Trail featuring more than 20 breweries, cideries and restaurants to give you a different taste of California's food and beverage scene. Stop in at the popular Sylvester's Burgers, a bright yellow building with a retro interior that's been serving up burgers since 1988. Another fun set of stops on the trail are Bristol Cider House and The Poisoned Apple, serving locally made hard cider.

Learn more at VisitAtascadero.com.

Big Sur

Big Sur is the quintessential image of the California coast: rugged and beautiful. From the picturesque Bixby Bridge to the mythical-looking McWay Falls, you'll be stopping every few minutes on this 90-mile stretch of road to snap photos.

Take Pacific Coast Highway 1 north from San Simeon to the McWay Waterfall Trailhead on the east side of the road. Walk a gentle, half-mile trail to an overlook giving you great views of the famous waterfall. There is no access to get up close to the falls and it's illegal to scramble down the cliffs.

For a hike where you can get closer to a waterfall, take the Pfeiffer Falls Trail, which is 2 miles roundtrip and winds through the gorgeous redwood forest of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Don't miss dinner at the Big Sur Lodge afterwards.

Big Sur Bixby Bridge on Hwy. 1 (Depositphotos)

The Big Blue

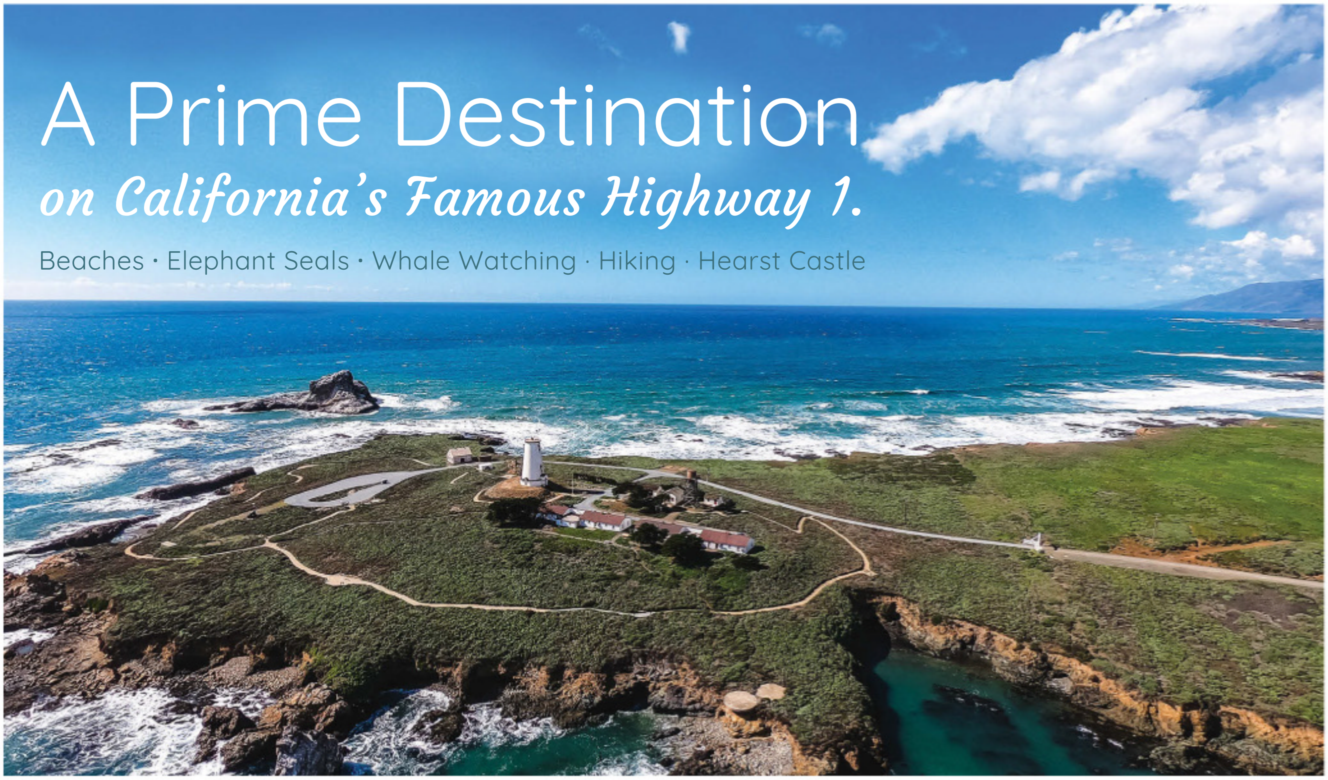
By Mikaela Ruland

PHOTO: Humpback Whale (Getty Images)

Home to a deep underwater canyon, vast kelp forests and abundant ocean life, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is an incredible example of conservation. Stretching from San Francisco in the north 276 miles to Cambria in the south, the sanctuary is one of the largest in the country. It extends an average of 30 miles out into the ocean and is even bigger than Yellowstone. The sanctuary is protected from oil drilling, ocean dumping and seabed mining, but other commercial activities like fishing and recreation are allowed.

This part of the Pacific Ocean is one of the most productive ocean ecosystems in the world. Countless species call the sanctuary home from humpback whales to common dolphins to sea otters. To watch for big marine wildlife and seabirds and to learn more about the sanctuary, visit the visitor centers in San Simeon or Santa Cruz, or step out onto the ocean-view decks at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey. To see some of the smaller creatures that live in the bay, explore tide pools at Natural Bridges State Beach in Santa Cruz or William Randolph Hearst Memorial Beach in San Simeon. To really get a taste of the sanctuary though, the best way to explore is by water. You'll find a variety of rentals and tour operators to do everything from kayaking to whale watching to diving in the sanctuary's waters in the towns along the coast.

Learn more at montereybay.noaa.gov.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Santa Cruz 6

Santa Cruz and the surrounding region are synonymous with surf culture and while there's no shortage of places to catch great waves, there's so much more. From giant redwoods to bucolic vineyards, here are six of the best stops in the area.

By Mikaela Ruland

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk (Courtesy Visit Santa Cruz County and Beach Boardwalk)

① Santa Cruz Wharf

The longest timber pile pier in the U.S., Santa Cruz Wharf stretches half-a-mile into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. From its end, you'll get 360-degree views of Monterey Bay. Steamer Lane, Santa Cruz' most iconic surf beach is also visible from the wharf.

TIP: If you want to get in on the surfing scene, book lessons with Club Ed or Richard Schmidt surf schools right in town.

② Lester Estate Wines

This winery combines great bottles with an even better atmosphere. Wine tastings are held on Saturdays on an outdoor patio under beautiful, sprawling trees. You can also tour the 210-acre Deer Park Ranch in a restored 1981 Range Rover Defender.

TIP: Check out the Corralitos Wine Trail if you want to make a day out of wine tasting.

③ Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park

Part of the only contiguous stand of redwoods on the central coast, this special park in Felton is perfect for a family-friendly stroll or a more strenuous hike. The Redwood Grove Loop Trail circles some of the biggest trees and is accessible to strollers and wheelchairs.

TIP: For a different experience, ride the Roaring Camp Steam Train through the redwoods.

④ Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

This classic boardwalk is fun for the whole family. It's home to two national historic landmarks: the wooden Giant Dipper Roller Coaster opened in 1924 and the Looff Carousel which has more than 70 hand-carved horses and opened in 1911.

TIP: Stop by The Picnic Basket at 125 Beach Street to get sandwiches, salads, coffee and more to enjoy on the beach. The Market Salad is a favorite.

⑤ Natural Bridges State Beach

Plan your stop at this beautiful beach in Santa Cruz to coincide with low tide when you can walk under its namesake natural sandstone arch and explore tide pools.

TIP: If you visit October through March, you might spot wintering Monarch butterflies in the park's butterfly preserve.

⑥ Martinelli's Company Store

The sparkling cider that's graced holiday tables for generations has been family-owned and produced in Watsonville since 1868. Visit the tasting room to learn about the company's history, sample complimentary cider and sparkling juices and bring home varietals and blends that aren't often found in stores.

TIP: To discover more local products, head to the Downtown Santa Cruz Farmer's Market on Wednesday afternoons.

Learn more at SantaCruz.org.

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Hiking in Harvey Bear Ranch County Park (Courtesy of Visit Gilroy)

Local Flavor

A gorgeous wine trail, beautiful family theme park and designer shops await.

By Tori Peglar

Not far from the giants of Silicon Valley sits a quaint town where you can drive to friendly boutique wineries, explore a gorgeous children's theme park and dine in what is known as the "Garlic Capital of the World."

Get a taste of Gilroy's world-famous garlic scene year-round by following its Road to Garlic map. It covers where to eat, drink and shop all things garlic. Opt for garlic soup and ice cream at the casual Garlic City Café. At Old City Hall, you'll find fine dining, delicious garlic dishes and restrooms behind bars from the days when the building housed the city jail. The Milias Restaurant, which opened in 1922, also offers great dining with dishes containing garlic.

Then admire the gorgeous landscape as you tour the beautiful Santa Clara Wine Trail with tasting opportunities at 30-plus wineries. Or head to the seasonal Gilroy Gardens Family Theme Park, which includes more than 40 rides and attractions, the super splashy Water Oasis play area, majestic gardens and wildly shaped trees known as "circus trees." The rides here are shaped into fantastic artichokes, apples and, of course, garlic bulbs.

If you still need some gear for your Yosemite stay, shop top designer brands at Gilroy Premium Outlets. Save 25-65% on outdoor recreation gear from Columbia, The North Face, Eddie Bauer and Timberland. And stock up on healthy snacks and sweet treats for the road at Casa de Fruta, the iconic roadside attraction with fresh produce, wine tasting, an antique carousel and 24-hour restaurant.

Get more information at VisitGilroy.com or stop by the California Welcome Center in Gilroy, 8155-6 Arroyo Circle, in the Gilroy Premium Outlets Building A near Forever 21.

Pinnacles Top 6

Here are some of our favorite things to do, from gorgeous hikes to exploring a cave.

By Tori Peglar

1 Explore a Cave

On the 2.2-mile Moses Spring to Rim Trail Loop at the Bear Gulch Day Use Area, you'll pass rock formations, a reservoir and Bear Gulch Cave that's open seasonally. You'll need a flashlight for the cave.

2 Admire the High Peaks

Head to the High Peaks to Bear Gulch Loop that's a strenuous 6.7 miles roundtrip with 1,425 feet in elevation gain. You'll hike into the High Peaks and then descend the ridge, passing through meadows and stands of sycamore and oak trees.

3 Spot a Condor

The park's California condors live in rocky cliffs on the High Peaks and Balcony Cliffs trails. But you can often spot them from the Chaparral and Bear Gulch parking lots. Early mornings are the best time to see them roosting. Condors have a 10-foot wingspan, the largest in North America.

Pinnacles National Park (Courtesy of San Benito County Chamber)

4 Attend a Ranger Program

The park's rangers offer fun, educational programs, so check in at the visitor center for a program schedule. Otherwise, watch the sunset from the west side of Prewett Point Trail or go stargazing.

5 See Iconic Rock Formations

From the Pinnacles Visitor Center, hike to Balconies Cave, a 9.4-mile, roundtrip moderate hike. You'll see Balconies Cave (bring a flashlight) and the largest rock formations in the park along the way.

6 Camp in the Park

Spend the night at Pinnacles Campground that can only be reached from the East Entrance of the park since there are no connecting roads between the two park entrances. The campground offers tent and RV sites, along with an in-ground pool.

The Pinnacle of a Getaway

Less-traveled Pinnacles National Park, a gorgeous vineyard trail and historic areas await in towns like Hollister in San Benito County.

By Tori Peglar

Only 10 years old as of 2023, Pinnacles National Park has yet to be discovered by the masses. It's an incredible hidden gem with its dormant volcanoes, which are today's pinnacles, the critically endangered California condor, three fault lines and stunning caves. Turn to page 43 to discover the best things to do in the park.

Afterwards, explore the area's rolling vineyard-covered hills along the Cienega Road Wine Trail near Hollister. Stop for tastings at Eden Rift, California's oldest continuously producing vineyard, enjoy a glass of award-winning pinot noir at Calera and see what was once the world's largest wine cellar spanning four acres at DeRose.

Locals liken driving the road to driving through a Pinterest board—it's just that gorgeous.

Nearby Hollister is the gateway to Pinnacles National Park and is definitely worth the visit. Stroll historic downtown Hollister, which celebrated 150 years in 2022, and check out more than 120 places to eat, like local favorite Grillin' & Chillin' Alehouse, at SavorSanBenito.com.

The Calaveras Fault meets the San Andreas Fault near Hollister, and you can see how the seismic activity has shifted sidewalks and curbs. Pick up a map at the San Benito Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center to tour the fault's slow work, including shifting a residential walkway two feet, so it no longer lines up with a house's front door. When you reach Dunne Park, you'll see the fault has created slight uplift in a north-south direction.

Don't miss Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area, which offers four-wheel drive, ATV and motorcycle opportunities, along with hiking, biking and equestrian trails, picnic areas and camping. It straddles the San Andreas Fault in the Gabilan Mountains. Another spot worth visiting is San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, which preserves a large number of Spanish-era buildings including the Mission San Juan Bautista.

When it's time for bed, choose from options like the modern Holiday Inn Express, or the Mission Farm RV Park which is 101 years old and has historic buildings on-site.

Learn more at DiscoverSanBenitoCounty.com.

PHOTO: Sunflower field (Courtesy of San Benito County Chamber)

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Whose Land Am I On?

Humans have lived in Yosemite Valley for up to 8,000 years and by the early 19th century, included the Southern Sierra Miwok, Mono Lake Paiute, Mission Indians, Chukchansi Yokuts and Western Mono people. When white gold miners flowed into the valley in 1849, they were ruthless in their pursuits and killed many of the Indigenous people living there. In 1851, the state-sponsored Mariposa Battalion raided and destroyed the native villages to make room for miners. As conflicts increased, the state sent the tribes to live on reservations.

In this vacuum, John Muir visited Yosemite and began his campaign to turn it into a national park, which succeeded in 1890. About 15 Miwok and Paiute families continued to live in the valley even after it was designated a park. The village was seen as employee housing, since many worked in the park. By 1969, the Park Service decided to destroy the village. It wasn't until 2019 that the Southern Indian Council of Mariposa County (formed by the Miwok people) won a proposal to build a village inside the park to showcase their history and use for cultural practices. It can be found near bus stop #5 in Yosemite Valley. The Southern Indian Council of Mariposa County is still petitioning the government for federal recognition.

Upper Yosemite Falls in Yosemite Valley (Grant Ordelheide)

Bird's Eye View

By Mikaela Ruland

For a perspective of Yosemite that few get to see, take a scenic flight with AirBorrn Aviation/Yosemite Airways. On this one-hour tour departing from Mariposa, you'll fly in a four-seat Cessna aircraft and soar high above Yosemite Valley. Protecting the peace and quiet of Yosemite is important to AirBorrn Aviation, so your plane will fly at altitudes high enough that people and wildlife on the ground below won't even notice you're there. The flight provides sweeping views of the park from the air. You'll peer down at Yosemite Valley, see the imposing faces of El Capitan and Half Dome from above and even pass high above the giant sequoias of Mariposa Grove, which don't look so giant from the sky.

"No matter what day you go up, the views are always incredible," says owner Tony Borreson. "Sometimes you'll see snow-capped peaks or sometimes you'll see a rainbow in the mist from one of the waterfalls."

The company has three planes that can fit up to three passengers apiece, depending on total weight. Each flight is private so your party will get an intimate experience with a knowledgeable pilot explaining what you're seeing over a headset. The views are great no matter which flight you choose, but photographers will want to book the plane nicknamed "Joy" which has bubble windows up front and port windows in the rear that open to allow for unobstructed photos. You can book a flight year-round, thanks to heaters inside the plane to keep you warm on winter days.

At $199 per person, these scenic flights are some of the most affordable you'll encounter.

Learn more and book your flight at YosemiteAviation.com.

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By Tori Peglar

CHUKCHANSI

Just 30 miles from Yosemite's South Entrance lies a resort with a luxurious pool experience, a spa with a full-service salon, modern hotel rooms and a casino.

At Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino in Coarsegold, a AAA Four Diamond property, you'll find remodeled hotel rooms featuring sophisticated designer amenities, luxury linens and spa bath products. Slip into your robe and slippers before taking in a spectacular sunset over the Sierra or order a bottle of wine to enjoy fireside in your suite.

Then enjoy a cocktail and appetizers at Nativo's outdoor canopied terrace, taking in Lilley Mountain and the Sierra foothills. For dinner, head to Casa de Fuego where you'll find hand-shaken margaritas made from an extensive tequila menu, fish tacos and carne asada burritos. Or head to Vintage Steakhouse where you can order entrees like filet mignon or double-cut pork chops with delicious sides like lobster mac & cheese. It earned a prestiged *Wine Spectator* Restaurant Award of Excellence.

Guests can enjoy live entertainment during Chukchansi's Summer Concert Series in its outdoor pavillion featuring bands like the Beach Boys or head to the casino for 73,000 square feet of gaming including slot machines and table games. Keep the party going throughout the night with live entertainment at the Firehouse Lounge, which offers a smoke-free gaming area, a full-service bar, 49 slot machines and two table games.

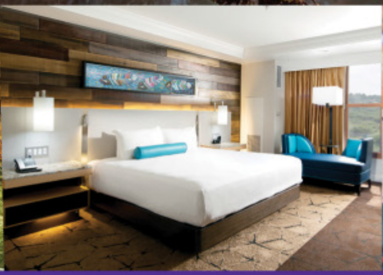
If you register for a Rewards Card, you'll earn points for dining and accommodations as you play. If you're looking for some self-care, opt for a cleansing facial, manicure or a therapeutic massage at Serenity Springs Spa.

Owned by the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, the resort is located off Hwy. 41, three miles south of the town of Coarsegold. It has been voted No. 1 for best casino in *Fresno Bee*'s Annual People's Choice Awards, and its newly renovated conference center can accommodate events of all sizes with special rates.

Learn more at ChukchansiGold.com.

PHOTO: Aerial View of Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino (Courtesy of Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino)

CHUKCHANSI



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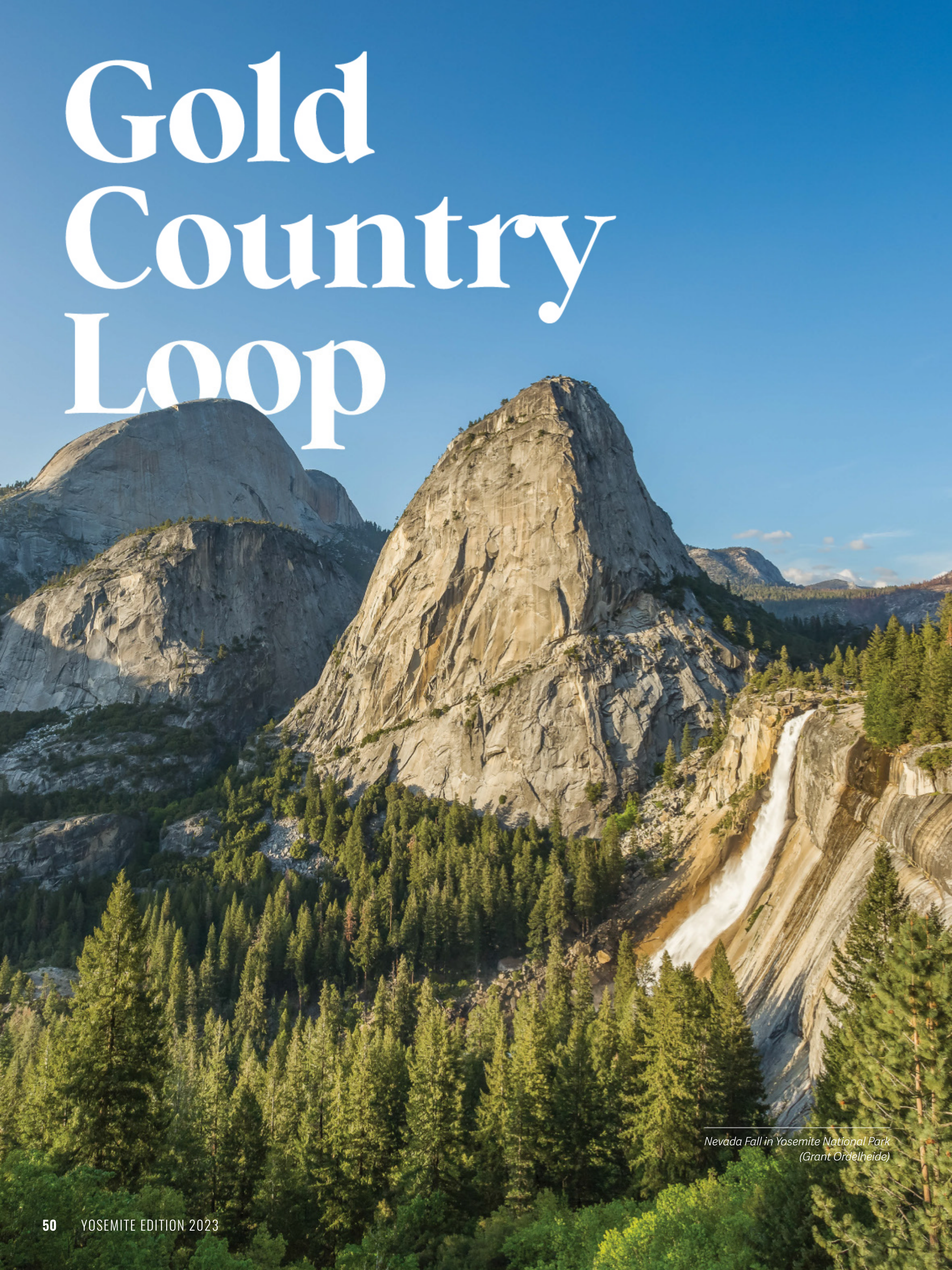
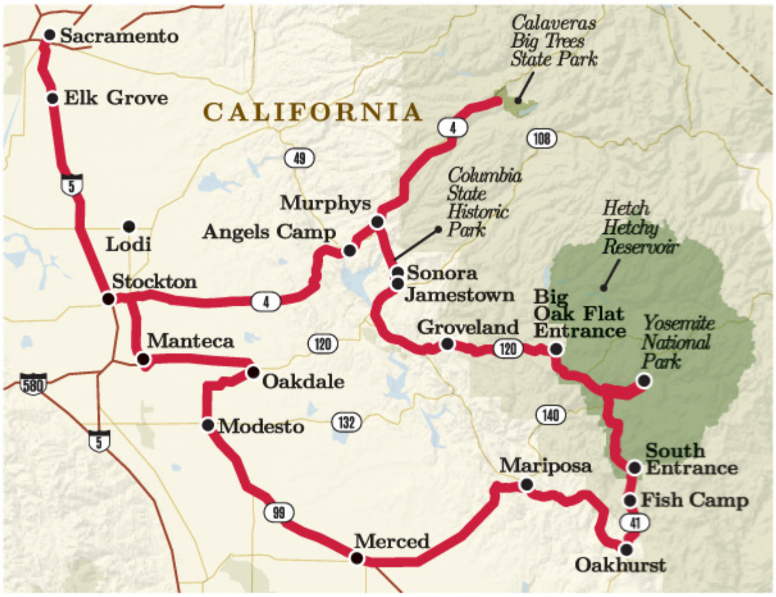


Nevada Fall in Yosemite National Park (Grant Ordelheide)

Tap into California's golden state of mind on this glittering road trip.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Columbia State Historic Park
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Sonora
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Stockton
4
Big Oak Flat Entrance
Groveland
Yosemite National Park
Manteca
120
120
580
Oakdale
Modesto
132
140
5
South Entrance
Mariposa
Fish Camp
99
41
Merced
Oakhurst

"Gold!" was the feverish cry that spread around the world in 1848, sending pioneers pouring into California to seek their fortune and sparking similar gold rushes across the West. Though the California Gold Rush only lasted for seven years, the effects were long lasting.

On this road trip, you'll discover fascinating history from this era of California and the even more intriguing ways in which the towns that sprang up with the Gold Rush have morphed into some of the state's most charming places to visit. Along the way you'll soak in all the natural beauty of the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada that greeted hopeful miners nearly 180 years ago.

Start in the state's capitol of Sacramento, where you can go underground to see the original bones of the historic town underneath today's vibrant city and ride a railroad through the farmlands that produce incredible ingredients used by up-and-coming local chefs. Head south through Elk Grove and Stockton, stopping along the way for incredible eats, to the heart of Gold Rush country where you'll find one of the largest gold nuggets ever mined in North America, and charming historic towns like Murphys and Angels Camp.

Discover the Sierra Nevada's best gems as you raft its iconic rivers and explore Yosemite, learning to capture the park's incredible beauty with our photography guide. As you wind your way back to Sacramento, pass through reinvigorated towns from the 1840s like Mariposa and Coulterville.

From waterfall mist to the splash of an oar in a rapid to the sun streaming through a grove of giant sequoias, most of the things that glitter on this road trip aren't gold, but this route will leave you feeling just as rich.

PHOTOS: Calaveras Big Trees State Park Boardwalk (Courtesy Calaveras Visitors Bureau), River rafting (Courtesy of OARS)

Explore Elk Grove

By Mikaela Ruland

Located in the heart of California's wine country and surrounded by incredible wetlands, this town is a perfect place to stop on the way to Yosemite.

Start your day at the Cosumnes River Preserve, 20 minutes south of town. See more than 250 species of birds as you walk the 3-mile roundtrip River Walk Trail. In the winter months, spot the majestic Sandhill Cranes at the preserve. The Cosumnes River provides stunning flat water opportunities to kayak, canoe or SUP. You can bring your own boat, or rent paddle crafts in nearby Lodi. For even more wetland beauty, Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge 20 minutes west of Elk Grove has easy, paved walking trails. Both areas offer guided tours with naturalists on dates throughout the summer.

After a day spent wildlife watching, there's no better place to relax than at one of Elk Grove's many wineries or breweries. To get a taste of all this area has to offer when it comes to adult beverages, buy a two-day Trail Pass from CorksAndCaps.org. This pass will let you order four flights from eight different participating wineries and breweries. Be sure to stop at McConnell Estates Winery, a fifth-generation operation located in an 1800s-era house turned tasting room. For beer, Flatland Brewing is a local favorite. It's the perfect spot to head for lunch as the on-site restaurant, the Pizza Peel, serves up delicious pizzas and burgers to accompany your flight.

When it's time for dinner, don't miss trying one of Elk Grove's diverse restaurants. You'll find many parts of the globe represented here from Korean barbeque to Nashville hot chicken to poke. A local favorite is Journey to the Dumpling which specializes in Shanghainese and Cantonese dishes and, of course, incredible dumplings. The Xiao Long Bao soup dumplings are always a crowd pleaser, but you'll find a variety of these steaming delicacies on the menu, including vegan options.

Learn more at ExploreElkGrove.com.

PHOTO: Picnic at McConnell Estates Winery (Courtesy Explore Elk Grove)

Farm To Fork

By Mikaela Ruland

Sacramento may be a bustling metropolis, but its location nestled in the heart of California's farmland has helped make it America's farm-to-fork capital. Sacramento is the fourth-largest sushi rice producer in the world and even exports to Japan.

It wasn't always a city so focused on incredible food, though. In the mid-1800s, the Gold Rush fueled it. Head to the Old Sacramento Waterfront, a state historic park which has preserved the city's past. You'll find shops, restaurants, candy stores and even a comedy club housed in original and restored buildings. But to really experience this city's past, take an Old Sacramento Underground Tour with the Sacramento History Museum. The city was raised almost a story in the 1860s after repeated flooding, but parts of the original city still remain underground.

Next, it's time to learn what farm-to-fork really means. Pioneered by the owners of Sacramento's Michelin-star-establishment, The Kitchen Restaurant, you'll find an unmatched enthusiasm for local ingredients everywhere you go. At the waterfront, you'll find them in everything from the dishes on Rio City Café's beautiful patio to the fine-dining menu at the The Firehouse Restaurant.

Don't get so caught up in the food that you forget Sacramento's incredible libation scene. Mornings are best spent at Old Soul Co. to experience the coffee that catalyzed Sacramento's roasting movement. When you're ready for an adult beverage, head 15 minutes out of town to the award-winning Bogle Vineyards, which flies under most people's radar. More of a beer drinker? Sacramento has more than 70 craft breweries.

After tasting your way through the city, it's time to get a look at where all those incredible ingredients come from. The Sacramento River Fox Train will take you on a 2.5-hour journey along the river through the area's gorgeous farmland. With themed rides for the family and speciality rides for adults like beer or wine trains, you'll find something for every taste.

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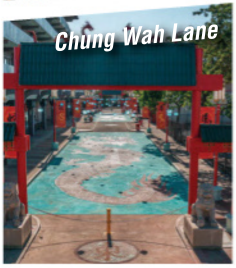
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Elk Grove to Stockton

Culture Stop

By Mikaela Ruland

Stockton was named the country's most diverse city by *U.S. News & World Report*, which makes it the perfect place to explore incredible food and stunning art.

Fresh produce and tantalizing spices draw locals, travelers and chefs to the hustle-and-bustle of the Downtown Stockton Certified Farmers' Market every Saturday from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m. (or until things sell out). It's one of the state's oldest and most successful farmers markets. Find it under Hwy. 4 at Washington and San Joaquin streets. A can't-miss event that celebrates the city's culture and cuisine is the Stockton Flavor Fest, May 19-21, 2023. It features art, live music and, of course, plenty of delicious food from around the globe.

Next, check out Stockton's art scene on the Stockton Art Trail with more than 50 stops at outdoor art installations. Don't miss the giant buddha and 90 other jewel-encrusted statues at the Wat Dhammararam Buddhist Temple, which celebrates the life and story of the Cambodian buddha. An active Buddhist temple, you may spot monks walking along its paths. The temple area is free and open to visitors during daylight hours. Donations are accepted.

At the Haggin Museum head inside to see stunning paintings by artists like Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Albert Bierstadt. You'll even catch a glimpse of Yosemite's timeless natural beauty here in Bierstadt's panoramic paintings of Yosemite Valley. The Haggin has the largest museum collection of major Bierstadt works. In fact, President Ronald Reagan borrowed *Looking Up the Yosemite Valley* to hang in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during his presidency. You'll also find a permanent gallery dedicated to Norman Rockwell's mentor, J.C. Leyendecker.

Find more at VisitStockton.org.

PHOTO: Wat Dhammararam Buddhist Temple statue (Ross Reier / Courtesy Visit Stockton)

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A More Sustainable Road Trip

With some forethought, you can make your Yosemite road trip a little greener by taking it in an electric vehicle. In Yosemite Valley, you'll find J-1772 charging stations in the parking lots of the Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite Village Store and Yosemite Valley Lodge. Plan to stay at Evergreen or Rush Creek lodges, or Tenaya at Yosemite near the Hetch Hetchy, Big Oak Flat and South entrances respectively where you'll find charging stations for guests. On the park's east side, there's a J-1772 charger at the Gus Hess Community Park in Lee Vining. Along the way, you'll also find charging stations in gateway towns like Groveland, Mariposa, Oakhurst and Mammoth Lakes.

Visit myyosemitepark.com/things-to-do/park-itineraries/sustainable-eco-friendly-vacation-itinerary/ for more ideas on making your road trip more eco-friendly.

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Calaveras Gems

Two hours from Yosemite, you'll find a sprinkling of charming historic towns, an astonishing grove of giant sequoias and the uncrowded California of which you've dreamed.

By Tori Peglar

① Calaveras Big Trees State Park

This amazing grove of giant sequoias was the first one to be discovered by settlers in 1852 and is California's longest continuously operating tourist attraction. See the spectacular giant sequoias up-close on the 1.4-mile North Grove Trail Loop. It's super popular for good reason as it's an easy trail for kids and adults.

② Moaning Caverns Adventure Park

Rediscover your inner child at this adventure park in Vallecito which includes cave tours and a 32-foot-high climbing wall for all ages. Home to the state's largest single cave chamber, take the Spiral Cave Tour that brings you into the marble depths of the Calaveras formation. View the main chamber by walking down a narrow wooden staircase 65 feet under the ground. Continue 100 more feet to the bottom.

③ Murphys

This charming historic town was voted one of the 15 must-see places by *Forbes Magazine* in 2021. Stop by Murphys Historic Hotel, a beautiful building that opened in 1856 and is known for its bar scene. There are more than 24 wine tasting rooms within walking distance of Main Street. Visit Ironstone Vineyards' museum to see an incredible 44-pound chunk of crystalline gold. In summer, there's a concert series at Ironstone Amphitheatre on site, as well.

Calaveras Big Trees State Park
(Preethi Chandrasekhar / Courtesy of Calaveras Visitors Bureau)

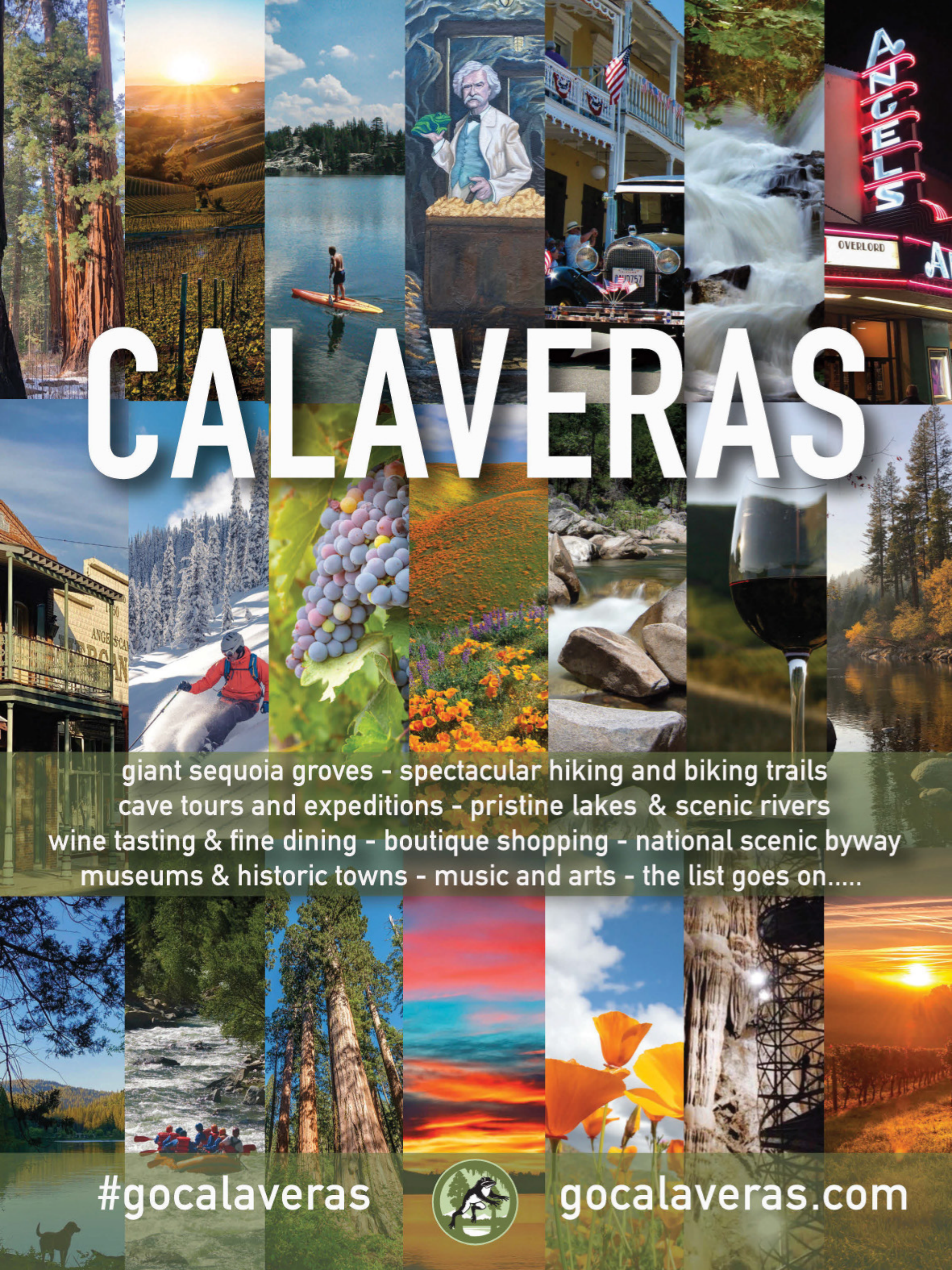
④ Angels Camp

Writer Mark Twain shot to fame when he wrote *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras*. Inspired by his story, residents started the annual Jumping Frog Jubilee in 1928. It's held at the Calaveras County Fairgrounds on the third weekend of May. Delve into gold-mining history at Angels Camp Museum to see new exhibits and a large collection of carriages and wagons. Just up the road is one of the best preserved and oldest school houses in the state, Altaville Schoolhouse. Don't miss historic downtown's Stories in Stones, a haven for rockhounds.

⑤ Mokelumne Hill

Hotel Léger Restaurant & Saloon, established in 1851, gives you a great opportunity to dine in a 130-year-old dining room or have a drink at the bar with locals. You can borrow a ghost hunting kit from the front desk since the hotel is rumored to be haunted by friendly spirits. Peruse Petroglyphe Gallery, which features contemporary art. Walk across the street to get a cup of coffee and snack at Moke Hill Nuts and Candies. For food and wine, head to Renegade Winery on Main Street where grapevines climb a huge pergola on the outdoor patio.

Learn more at GoCalaveras.com.



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Wet and Wild

Enjoy a whitewater adventure just outside of Yosemite.

By Tori Peglar

Experience two of Yosemite National Park's rivers for a thrilling whitewater rafting adventure.

Both the Merced and Tuolumne rivers flow out of the park, offering class III and IV rapids. For a day trip, go with OARS down the Merced River, a fun, rollercoaster of rapids with a break for lunch.

For a multi-day trip, raft the Tuolumne, one of the best whitewater rafting experiences in the country, says Steve Markle, a spokesman for OARS. Only two commercial trips are allowed down the nearly continuous stretch of class IV rapids per day, making for a remote and pristine experience. Along the way, you'll stop to do some hikes, explore an abandoned mine and play beach games.

"You are literally laughing like a kid bouncing through the rapids, and there are not many activities that evoke that kind of response," Markle says. "Even if you fall out of the boat, it's a story you'll tell for the rest of your life."

Depending on water flows, OARS has minimum age requirements for each trip.

Learn more at Oars.com/California or call 800-446-7238.

PHOTOS: Rafting the Merced (Rapid Shooter / Courtesy of OARS) Raincoat, Hat, Quick-dry pants, Sunglasses, Sandals (Depositphotos)

Rafting Checklist

Don't miss the boat on what to bring on your rafting adventure. Here are some tips from Steve Markle of OARS.

WARM LAYERS

These include a raincoat and a warm top layer for cool mornings and cold river water.

HAT AND SUNSCREEN

Avoid a sunburn while on the river.

QUICK-DRY SHORTS AND SHIRT

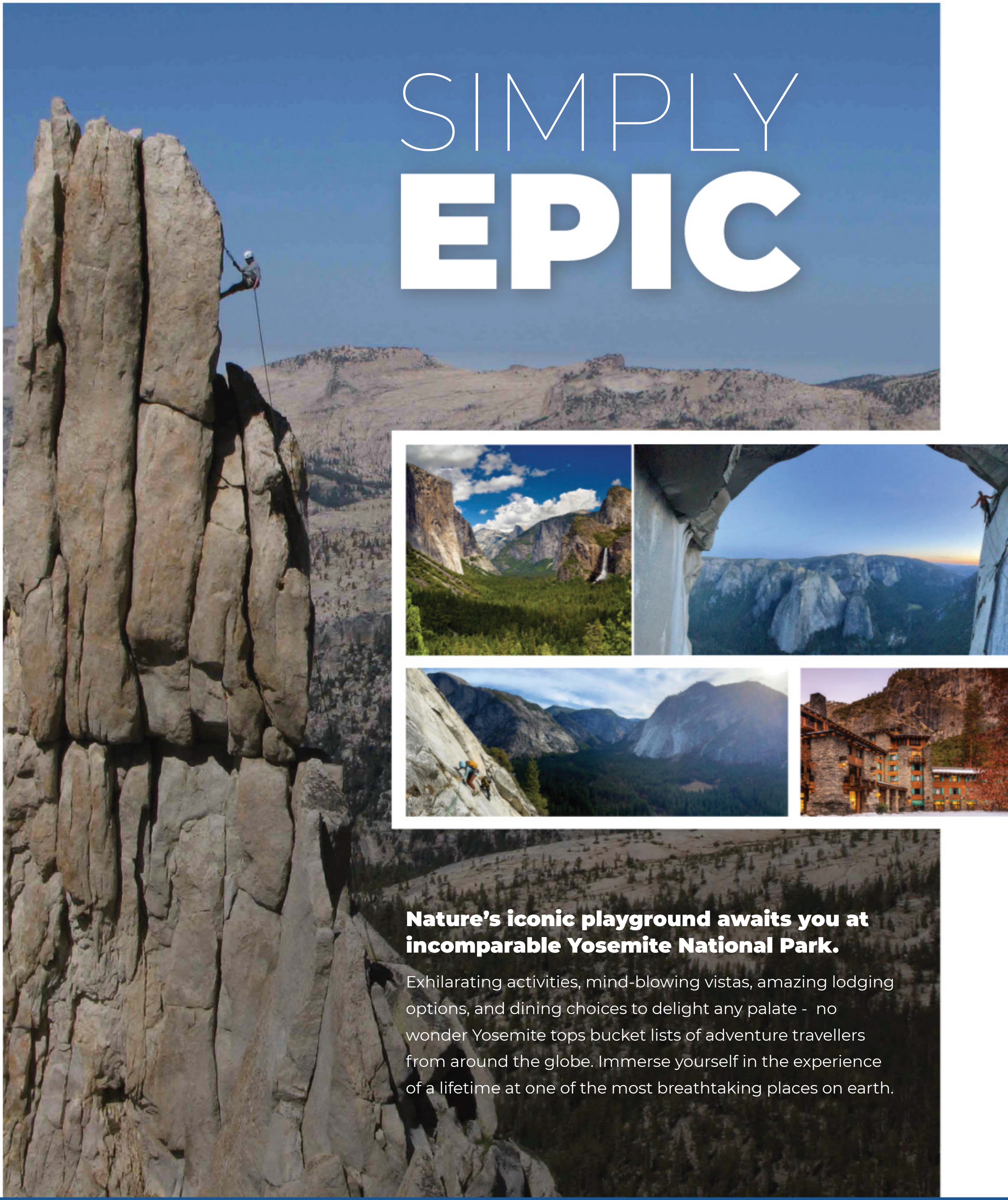
Avoid wearing cotton clothing since it doesn't dry as fast as synthetic materials, leaving you chilly.

SUNGLASSES WITH A STRAP

Even gentle rolling waves can send your sunglasses into the river.

SANDALS

Bring water sandals with a secure strap or an old pair of sneakers. Don't wear flip-flops, which will fall off and float down the river.



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Around the Clock...

Photograph Yosemite's most stunning scenes from sunrise to sunset to night skies.

by Mikaela Ruland

As a photographer, you'll be hard pressed to find time to sleep when you visit Yosemite. This park offers spectacular opportunities for photography all day long from when the first rays of light crest the horizon, to when the sun melts into the mountains and paints the sky pink, to when the stars come out. Each time of day comes with unique conditions for photographers, so we've compiled our favorite locations and tips from Tamron on how to get the best photos of this park.

Valley View (Ken Hubbard)
F/16; ISO 200; 1/25 second

Sunrise at Valley View

While there's no shortage of stunning viewpoints in Yosemite, Valley View makes for one of the best to capture sunrise. Located on the western end of Yosemite Valley, this viewpoint overlooks the Merced River with views of El Capitan, Sentinel Rock, Cathedral Rocks and Bridalveil Fall in the background. It's situated along Northside Drive, the one-way road leading out of Yosemite Valley. Use caution around the river, especially in the spring when it's running swiftly.

Arrive 45 minutes before sunrise to give yourself time to set up and capture all the stages of dawn before the sun finally appears. Be sure to bring a headlamp.

Tamron Tips: Clean the front element of your lens when shooting into the rising sun. If there's dirt or dust on your front element, you might end up with lens flares in your image. Sunrise is usually a high contrast situation, so be sure to expose for the highlights to maintain detail. To create a starburst effect with the rising sun, stop down your aperture to F/16 or F/22 and wait until the sun just crests the horizon. A wide-angle zoom lens like the Tamron 17-28mm F/2.8 Di III RXD or the 28-200mm F/2.8-5.6 Di III RXD is a great choice for both sunrise and sunset.

Sunset at Glacier Point

Glacier Point (Ken Hubbard)
F/8; ISO 100; 1/40 second

Capture sunset from one of the most iconic spots in the park. Glacier Point is set up high, offering sweeping views of Half Dome, Yosemite Valley, Yosemite Falls and the Sierra Nevada as far as the eye can see. A large, paved overlook provides plenty of places to set up your tripod and easy access back to the car after dark. Repairs are being completed on Glacier Point Road in 2023, so delays of 30 minutes should be expected. Factor this into the normal one-hour drive time from Yosemite Valley when planning your sunset mission. Aim to be at Glacier Point 30-45 minutes before sunset to give yourself time to set up.

Be sure to stick around after the sun sets and the colors begin to fade for blue hour. This time of day is the hour just before sunrise or just after sunset when a beautiful blue tint envelopes the landscape. It's a great time to take photos.

Tamron Tips: When shooting sunset, set your aperture to F/16 or F/22 to maximize your depth of field. If you're using a tripod, use the lowest ISO to maximize quality. If you're hand-holding, set your ISO to the lowest value that allows a fast enough shutter speed to get a clear image.

Night at El Capitan Meadows

El Capitan (Ken Hubbard)
F/2.8; ISO 3200; 20 seconds

Thanks to its commanding rock formations providing a sense of place, Yosemite is an excellent park to try your hand at night sky photography. Valley View or Glacier Point would also be great spots to capture the stars, but for a unique shot, head to El Capitan Meadow between sunset and midnight on a night close to a new moon for the darkest skies. In addition to capturing stars over the imposing face of El Capitan, spring through fall you'll likely also catch a strange-looking scene. While it might appear that stars have fallen onto the rock, it's actually the headlamps of climbers camped out on routes on the formation's granite faces. A headlamp with a red light will be helpful for setting up your gear in the dark while still preserving your night vision.

Tamron Tips: A fast aperture, wide angle lens like a Tamron 17-28mm F/2.8 for full-frame or 11-20mm F/2.8 for crop-sensor is best for night photography. Settings will vary based on conditions, but start at F/2.8 at an ISO between 1600 and 6400 and a shutter speed between 10 and 30 seconds. Be sure to have a stable tripod and shutter release or remote timer so you don't shake your camera while taking a long exposure, and turn off your lens' image stabilization.

You'll likely need to manually focus as your auto-focus won't be effective in the dark. Use the magnifier on your camera's LCD screen to enlarge a bright star or planet, then move your focus ring back and forth until the point of light is sharp. Zoom in on your first few images to make sure the stars aren't blurry. You can use a piece of tape to secure the focus ring, so you don't accidentally bump it out of focus.

These tips were sponsored by Tamron. Learn more and find your perfect camera lens at tamron-americas.com.

Autocamp Yosemite (Courtesy Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau)

Gold Rush Towns

Discover the top five reasons to explore the towns of Mariposa, Midpines and Coulterville near Yosemite.

By Tori Peglar

1 Unique Lodging

Whether it's a cool Airstream at Autocamp Yosemite or an upscale resort at Tenaya at Yosemite, there are dozens of unique lodging opportunities near the park.

TIP: Staying outside of Yosemite helps your vacation dollars go farther, and it's often easier to get a hotel room in towns like Mariposa and Midpines than in the park.

2 Delicious Eats

In Mariposa, head to Charles Street Dinner House for a burger made with house-ground certified Angus beef topped with American cheese and grilled onions or opt for portobello ravioli.

TIP: Head to 1850 Restaurant & Brewery for locally brewed beer named after Yosemite-area places like El Portal, a hoppy lager, and Bridalveil, a honey blonde ale.

3 Incredible History

In the Mariposa Museum and History Center, discover artifacts from the Miwok people, Chinese immigrants and settlers who mined gold and worked in the mining camps. The new Yosemite Climbing Museum and Gallery in Mariposa features artists, artifacts and photographs that reveal the history of rock climbing.

TIP: Don't miss the Fricot Nugget at the California State Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa that weighs a whopping 13.8 pounds.

4 Historic Downtowns

Check out Mariposa's locally owned stores like Anahata Fair Trade for handcrafted gifts and pottery, Brick Wall Boutique for clothes and home goods or NativeEarth for locally made leather boots and shoes.

TIP: In Coulterville, dine on the patio and eat locally sourced food for breakfast or lunch at the Coulter Café before doing a walking tour of this historic town of 200.

5 Aerial Experiences

Soar over El Capitan and Half Dome far above the crowds in a Cessna with Airborrn Aviation (see more on pg. 47).

TIP: If you want to get your adrenaline flowing, jump out of a plane with Skydive Yosemite near Mariposa and get a view of Half Dome during your tandem jump.

Learn more at Yosemite.com.

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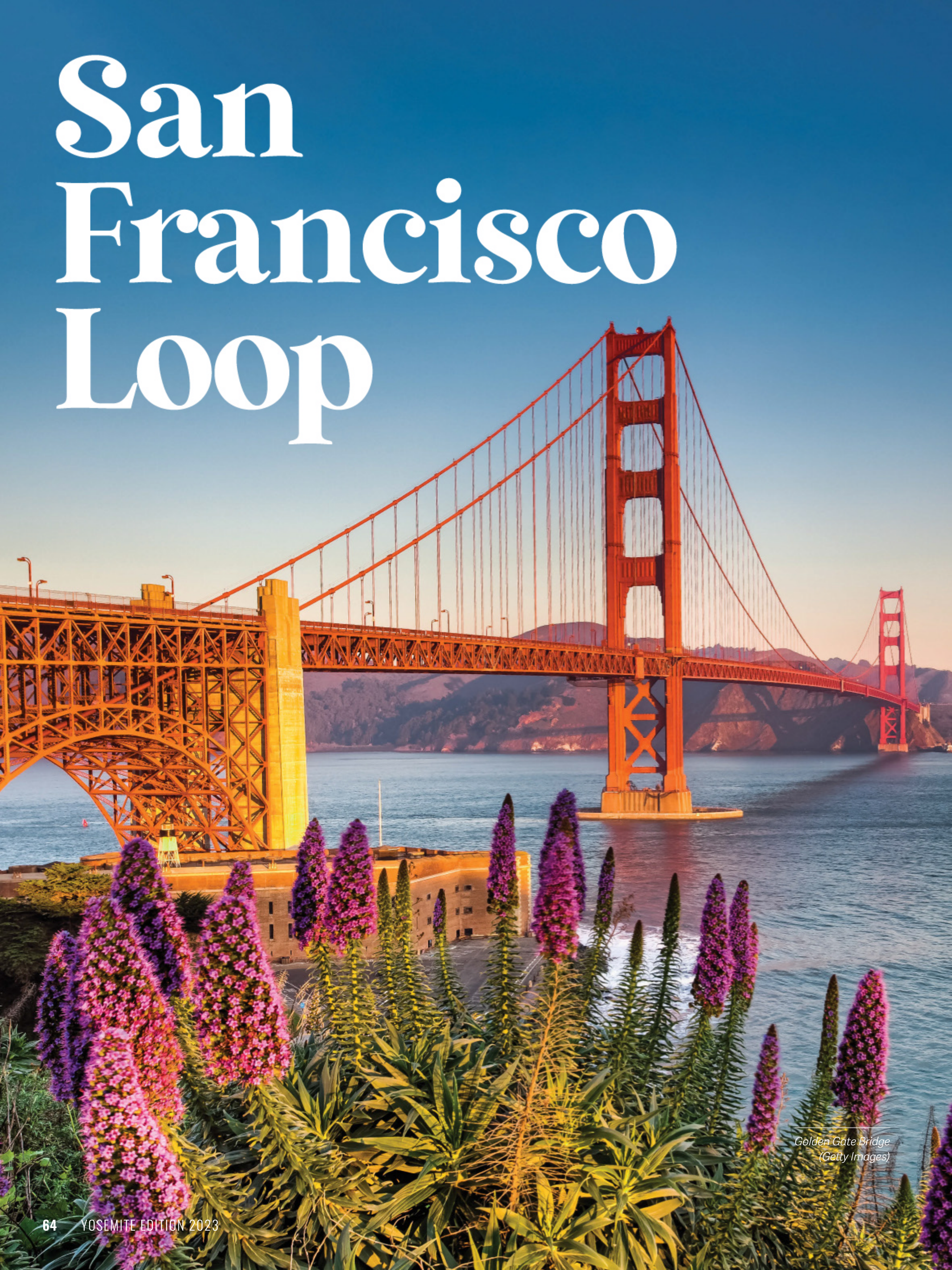
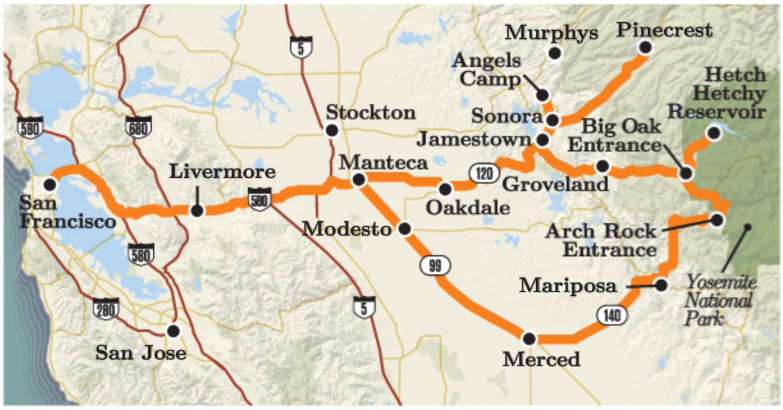
San Francisco Loop



Golden Gate Bridge (Getty Images)

From the Golden City, wind your way through unpretentious wine country, orchards and historic towns to reach Yosemite.



High up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, a snowflake falls. When spring's warm sun turns winter snows to water, that snowflake takes a circuitous route, through mountain streams winding across wildflower dotted meadows, through tributaries like the American and Tuolumne rivers and eventually ends up in either the Sacramento or the San Joaquin rivers, flowing through a giant expanse of wetlands known as the Bay-Delta. Eventually, the snowflake flows into the San Francisco Bay and passes under the Golden Gate Bridge to reach the Pacific Ocean. This tiny snowflake, and unfathomable numbers of its companions, water two-thirds of California.

On this road trip, you'll trace the snowflake's route backwards. From San Francisco's shores, decide whether to visit Yosemite by rail or car. If you take the train inland, you'll pass through one of the country's most productive agricultural regions. By car, journey through towns like Livermore where you'll find a laidback wine region, with grapes nourished by that snowflake. In Oakdale, explore Gold Rush history and a delicious culinary scene before continuing to towns like Pinecrest, where you can paddle on a peaceful, snowmelt-fed lake or Tuolumne where you'll find apple orchards producing cider.

When you make it to Yosemite, be sure to visit the Hetch Hetchy area, where less than 1% of park visitors ever venture. There's a gorgeous, historic lodge to stay in nearby and you can hike around the reservoir and discover its history, which you'll learn more about on pg. 76. What was once a lush valley is now a reservoir holding water for the city of San Francisco.

After Yosemite, wind your way back through beautiful farmlands and orchards, stopping in Modesto where you'll find a sea of lovely white blossoms in the spring, thanks to the city's groves of almond trees.

As you make your way towards the coast, consider that little snowflake and its incredible journey. All the wine you've sipped, streams you've hiked along and produce you've eaten along the way are all thanks to Sierra Nevada snowmelt.

PHOTOS: Del Valle Regional Park (Derek Gaumer Photography / Courtesy Visit Tri-Valley), Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias (Grant Ordelheide)

Amtrak train through vineyards (Courtesy of San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority)

Rail to Trails

Avoid Bay Area and Yosemite traffic when you take the train.

By Tori Peglar

Want to avoid traffic, ride seamlessly into Yosemite National Park, and enjoy California craft beer and regional wines along the way? Hop aboard the Amtrak San Joaquins train from San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles (and Fresno seasonally) for the safest way to travel to the park. It's also an exciting adventure with rare views of California's breathtaking landscapes along the way.

On board you'll catch gorgeous views of the San Francisco Bay before you enter the San Joaquin Valley, one of the world's most productive agricultural regions. Through big picture windows, you'll spot almond orchards and peach trees, along with carrots, tomatoes, grapes and more.

You also have the freedom to walk around, stretch your legs and dine. Stop in at the train's Café Car, which is stocked with vegan tamales, Snack Packs, hot dogs, hamburgers, Blue Diamond California almonds and San Joaquin craft beers and wines. If you want to check on your vacation reservations or the kids want to watch a movie, there's free WiFi on the train and on Amtrak's Thruway buses.

For the last stretch into the park, you'll board the YARTS bus line in Merced into the heart of Yosemite. Bypass the traffic lined up as you coast by the crowds. From your window, you can enjoy the views rather than stress about navigating the roads and the cars. Plus, you don't have to look for a parking spot because YARTS will drop you off at variable locations in the park From there, you can transfer to the park's free shuttle system which covers Yosemite Valley. Learn more about YARTS on pg. 84.

While your total travel time is around six hours, it could take you just as long if not longer by car, considering the infamous Bay Area traffic and the number of laps you'd do in the park, trying to find that elusive parking spot.

"Driving up the winding roads of Yosemite can be daunting, especially in the winter. Riding the train and connecting YARTS service takes the burden off so you can relax and enjoy the gorgeous scenic views," says David Lipari, marketing and outreach coordinator of San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority. "Plus, you can let your Yosemite vacation experience start even earlier by taking the train."

Learn more at AmtrakSanJoaquins.com.

One Ticket

No train goes all the way from San Francisco to Yosemite, but your Amtrak ticket provides you stress-free, seamless bus and train transportation into the heart of the Yosemite Valley.

Your ticket includes a ride on the Amtrak Thruway bus from downtown San Francisco to the Emeryville train station. Once you arrive at the train station, you'll wait no more than 10 minutes to board your train.

From the train, your views of the San Francisco Bay will transition to the green fields and orchards of the San Joaquin Valley. Choose between two stops to exit the train and board a YARTS bus that brings you into Yosemite.

Get off at the Merced train station where you'll catch your YARTS bus straight into Yosemite via the Arch Rock Entrance or get off farther south at the Fresno train station and take YARTS through the South Entrance of Yosemite.

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Get Ready to Leave Your Heart

Start your Yosemite road trip in one of California's most intriguing cities: San Francisco.

By Tori Peglar and Mikaela Ruland

Once home to Al "Scarface" Capone and other notorious criminals, Alcatraz Island is a National Park Service site located 1.25 miles offshore of San Francisco. It was one of the country's most infamous federal prisons for a short period of its history. While the federal prison only operated from 1934 to 1963, its legend has only grown with time.

This small island off the coast of San Francisco also has a lesser-known history: it was occupied by the Indians of All Tribes for 19 months in the name of Native American civil rights, beginning in 1969. The group demanded reparation for the lands taken from tribes and treaties broken by the United States government. Their 19-month stay sparked the Indian Red Power Movement and led to major changes in federal policies.

Travel to the island via Alcatraz Cruises, the only authorized concessionaire for ferrying passengers. It's a 15-minute ferry ride to Alcatraz, and visitors can stay until the last ferry. Check out the ranger programs at the dock when you disembark on the island.

Back on the mainland, explore this metropolis known as the "Golden City" by taking an unforgettable walk across the famous Golden Gate Bridge. It's a 1.7-mile one-way walk or bike across the bridge painted "International Orange," so ships can see it in the fog. Speaking of fog, your views from the bridge might be dampened (literally) by the persistent weather phenomenon locals call Karl, named after the misunderstood giant in the movie *Big Fish*. The city has, on average, 108 days of foggy weather a year.

Head to PIER 39 where you can stroll the pier full of shops and restaurants and watch the resident herd of California sea lions at K-Dock. While the population fluctuates depending on the season, the record was 1,701 in November 2008. From PIER 39 you can stroll along the Embarcadero and find lots of other tourist attractions from the much-loved Boudin Bakery where sourdough has been made since 1849, to the Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory.

Don't miss heading inland on one of the city's famous cable cars to Chinatown. The largest and oldest Chinatown in North America, this area of San Francisco is a fun place for tourists to shop, eat and experience a wide variety of Chinese culture, but it's not a tourist attraction. This area is the home and community of 15,000 residents, 81% of which identify as Asian. Turn to page 88 to learn about California's little-known Chinese history.

PHOTOS: Sailboats by Alcatraz Island (Depositphotos), Lanterns in Chinatown (Getty Images), Cable car (Getty Images)

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The Bay's Sunny Side

Forty-five minutes from Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, lose the fog and the city's high prices and delve into a vibrant wine and beer scene in the Livermore area.

By Tori Peglar

There's a gorgeous corner of the Bay Area filled with vineyards, breweries and affordable hotels. It's also the birthplace of most of the chardonnay produced in the United States.

In 1912, Ernest Wente convinced his father, C.H. Wente to import Chardonnay cuttings at their vineyard in Livermore. The result, after three decades of hard work, was the nation's first varietally labeled chardonnay, a 1936 vintage. But Wente is also among 2% of California wineries to be a Certified California Sustainable Winery, using energy and water-efficient techniques to produce its wines.

Today, you can base out of Livermore, Danville, Dublin or Pleasanton and visit Wente Vineyards, along with more than 50 other wineries in the Livermore valley. Retzlaff Vineyards is a certified organic vineyard. And Page Mill Winery is an organic winery that uses biodynamic farming to grow its grapes, which includes using sheep and chickens to control pests and weeds.

This back-to-the-earth mentality means you'll find an easygoing, unintimidating attitude in the valley's laidback hills braided with green rows of grapes. It, along with affordable hotels, is what sets the area apart from other wine regions of northern California. Plus, it's a short drive into San Francisco to see the city's iconic sites.

Yet, long before vineyards scaled the hills and before Prohibition, the area was one of the nation's largest producers of hops. Today, craft breweries are sprouting up. Explore the region and its beer scene on the Tri-Valley Beer Trail, a curated collection of exclusive deals and discounts from the best breweries, alehouses and taprooms that you can tap into on Visit Tri-Valley's website. The Tri-Valley Beer Trail has 19 stops, strung together across Pleasanton, Livermore, Dublin and Danville.

In addition to a wine and beer trail, the area also has a caffeine trail with 18 coffee shops, tea houses, including Boba Bliss, and cafes, along with an ice cream trail sprinkled with approximately a dozen locally owned ice cream shops.

Head to Meadowlark Dairy, the first certified dairy in California, to get seven flavors of soft-serve ice cream swirled together. Located in historic downtown Pleasanton, the longtime dairy has a drive-up (or walk-up) window. In addition to ice cream, it sells butter, milk and cheese. "People love it so much they'll wait in a line that goes down the street," says Robin Fahr, Visit Tri-Valley's vice president of marketing.

Then, head outdoors to Del Valle Regional Park to cool off 10 miles south of Livermore. Amid oak-covered golden hills and the five-mile-long lake, relax at a swimming beach, rent a pedal boat, canoe or motorboat or spend the night in a campground.

Forgot some items for your road trip to Yosemite? Swing by the San Francisco Premium Outlets in Livermore. There's a Columbia outlet for those looking for outdoor clothing, including raincoats, wind layers, base layers and more.

Learn more at VisitTriValley.com.

PHOTO: Del Valle Regional Park (Derek Gaumer Photography / Courtesy Visit Tri-Valley)

Find Western Heritage

By Mikaela Ruland

Tucked along Hwy. 120, Oakdale holds its heritage close. From local artisan producers and farmers to Western culture, this town is a great place to spend some time on the way to Yosemite.

Start your day at Oakdale Cheese, where you can take a tour and learn how cheese is made, visit a petting zoo and enjoy local wine, beer and snacks like charcuterie under the sprawling branches of the property's willow trees. Don't miss the grilled cheese, made with award-winning gouda.

Next up, the small Gold Rush town of Knight's Ferry. Located along the Stanislaus River, this historic town is home to a beautiful 19th century covered wooden bridge. Grab an ice cream at Knight's Ferry Creamery or enjoy lunch and a drink on the patio of River's Edge Bar & Grill overlooking the water. If you want to take your visit up a notch, book a trip with Sunshine Rafting Adventures to experience the town by raft.

At the end of the day don't miss winding down at one of the town's three breweries. Each has its own distinct vibe. Grains of Virtue Brewing Company is located in an old movie theater and has high ceilings and murals adorning the walls. You'll find lots of creative beers here and monthly comedy nights. At Dying Breed Brewing, patrons can discover up and coming musicians on Friday and Saturday nights. At Last Call Brewing Company, experience all that downtown Oakdale has to offer and swing by for their Tuesday trivia nights.

Learn more at VisitOakdale.com.

A hidden gem for your road trip
Check out this spot along CA-120 to Yosemite Valley, you can thank us later.
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Cowboy Capital of the World
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Tuolumne's Top 6

More than half of this county—pronounced 'two-all-oh-me'—lies in Yosemite. Discover the top six places to visit.

By Tori Peglar

PHOTOS: Trail Ride, Kennedy Meadows Pack-Station (Maddie Maney Photography Courtesy Tuolumne County)

1 Columbia State Historic Park

See what life was like during the Gold-Rush era when more than $1 billion was mined in the area between 1850-79. Walk the charming streets, ride a stagecoach, browse the 1850s-era shops, dine at a restaurant, pan for gold or stay the night at one of two historic hotels. Scenes from the TV show *Little House on the Prairie* were filmed here.

2 Jamestown

This quaint historic town is a great place to stop for a meal or stay the night, especially if you want to ride a historic train at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park where a number of Hollywood movies were filmed. Afterwards, head to Bear Tent Brewing Co., browse shops like Nest & Nook, Gold Country Outfitters and Tiny Birds Tiny Bees or head to Arthur Michael Vineyard & Winery or Gianelli Vineyards' tasting room nearby. The Jamestown Hotel has a restaurant and eight hotel rooms.

3 Pinecrest

Rent a kayak or a pontoon boat when you stay at Pinecrest Lake Resort, a stunning lakeside area off Hwy. 108. At night, watch an outdoor movie under the stars at the Pinecrest Theater Memorial Day through Labor Day.

4 Apple Orchards

Explore two different apple orchards. At Cover's Apple Ranch in Tuolumne you'll find family fun from sipping fresh-pressed cider to visiting with barnyard animals and hopping on a miniature train for kids. At Indigeny Reserve in Sonora, you can sample hard ciders, brandys and vodkas in a sustainably built tasting room. Bring a picnic to eat amid 160 acres of organic apple orchards and hiking trails.

5 Groveland

Twenty-four miles from Yosemite's Big Oak Flat Entrance, this historic town is fun to stroll. Listen to live music on the outdoor patio of the Groveland Hotel or have a drink at the Iron Door Saloon, the oldest continuously operating saloon in the state, which opened in 1852. Groveland is the largest town between the park entrance and Sonora.

6 Emigrant Wilderness

Hike in solitude at this 113,000-acre wilderness area bordered by Yosemite to the south. Filled with placid lakes and gorgeous scenery, you'll feel like you have the Sierra all to yourself. Afterwards head to Inner Sanctum Cellars in Sonora for live music and wine tasting or catch a play at the Sierra Repertory Theatre.

Learn more about Tuolumne County at VisitTCToday.com/YosemiteJournal

visit
TUOLUMNE
county
★CALIFORNIA★

WANDER
LEADS TO
Wonder

Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias,
Yosemite National Park

Wander
FREELY

The majestic beauty of Yosemite, authentic history of California Gold Country and endless adventure of the High Sierra all beckon you to lose your to-do list and let nature lead the way. So clip in explorers and set your compass to Tuolumne County, good times are calling and you must go.

VisitTCToday.com/YosemiteJournal

HIGH SIERRA ······· GOLD COUNTRY ······· YOSEMITE

SACRAMENTO
PLACERVILLE
50
49
16
80
5
99
49
TUOLUMNE COUNTY
108
PINECREST
SAN FRANCISCO
SONORA
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
120
580
108
120
GROVELAND
5
49

Wapama Falls at Hetch Hetchy (Kim Carroll Photography / Courtesy of Rush Creek Lodge)

A Tale of Two Lodges

Looking to recharge? Stay at Evergreen Lodge just a mile from the park's Hetch Hetchy Entrance or Rush Creek Lodge less than a mile from the Big Oak Flat Entrance.

By Mikaela Ruland and Tori Peglar

Relax at Rush Creek

Treat yourself to a relaxation day at Rush Creek Lodge, starting with their new full-service spa focused on the natural elements that make Yosemite so special: water, wood and stone. There are warm waterfalls to sit under, a mineral hot tub, aromatherapy and sensory rooms and more.

Flex your creativity with a glassblowing class on the Pool Bar deck, perfect for adults and even kids, ages eight and up, where you'll make a piece of glass art to take home. Both Rush Creek and Evergreen also offer energy work, massages and yoga. Boga board workouts take place seasonally at the Rush Creek pool.

See a New Side of Yosemite

Spend the day exploring Yosemite's forgotten side. The Hetch Hetchy area's incredible waterfalls and granite domes are considered some of Yosemite's best-kept secrets. Evergreen Lodge is just one mile from the Hetch Hetchy Entrance.

To see the park from a new perspective, book a Yosemite Flight Tour through either lodge. An off-duty fire-fighting plane will take you soaring over El Capitan, Half Dome and Yosemite's backcountry.

Both Evergreen and Rush Creek offer guided services, be it hiking or touring, or their professional guides will offer you free advice on what to explore.

Unplug and Reconnect

Swim or soak in the lodges' saltwater pools and hot tubs. Then, enjoy incredible locally sourced food followed by free s'mores around an outdoor firepit.

"Our approach to food is inspired by a genuine love for our surroundings and a desire to satisfy hearty appetites that are a natural part of a Yosemite adventure," says Lee Zimmerman, one of the lodge's owners. Chefs also accommodate vegetarian and gluten-free patrons.

At the lodges, you'll truly enjoy what's absent: there are no TVs in the rooms. But there are board games and Alexa smart devices for streaming music.

Avoid Traffic When Visiting Yosemite

Stay at either lodge to avoid the park's traffic and lack of parking. At Evergreen, you're close to Hetch Hetchy, the least visited park entrance. And at Rush Creek, you can leave your car behind to really experience the park.

From mid-May through September, Rush Creek serves as a YARTS stop, the regional public bus system, with three trips to and from Yosemite Valley daily.

And if you arrive too late in the day to explore the park? Stretch your legs on one of Rush Creek's three hiking and biking trails to experience the beauty of the area from the lodge's front door.

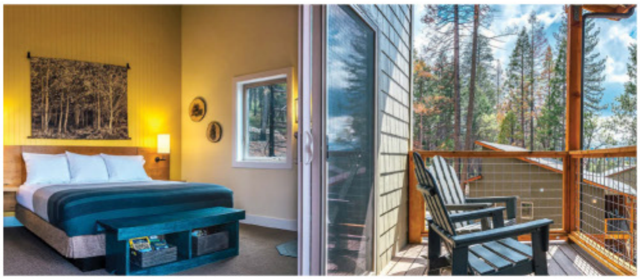
Learn more at EvergreenLodge.com and RushCreekLodge.com

EXPLORE YOSEMITE IN STYLE

Restaurants • Taverns • Pools & Hot Tubs • Daily Activities
Guided Tours & Outdoor Adventures • General Stores

RUSH CREEK LODGE & SPA

Rush Creek provides a relaxed yet sophisticated experience inspired by its 20-acre hillside setting near the Highway 120 West entrance to the park. The lodge features a tastefully appointed mix of 143 rooms, suites and villas, and a new Spa filled with amenities reflecting the nature of Yosemite.



For best rates and service:
209-379-2373
RushCreekLodge.com
info@rushcreeklodge.com

EVERGREEN LODGE

The Evergreen is a newly expanded historic resort with 88 cabins spread throughout 20 acres of woods, just 1 mile from Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy entrance.

See for yourself why it's a *Fodor's Guide* "Favorite" and why *Frommer's Guide* calls it "the classic Yosemite experience."

For best rates and service:
209-379-2606
EvergreenLodge.com
info@evergreenlodge.com

YOSEMITE'S WATER WARS

One hundred years after flooding Hetch Hetchy, central California's water struggles have only intensified.

By Mikaela Ruland

Today, when the 1% of Yosemite visitors who make it through the Hetch Hetchy Entrance look out at the landscape, they see a vast expanse of blue water, ringed by granite mountains with waterfalls tumbling down their faces. A hundred years ago, however, the view looked a little different.

When naturalist and conservationist John Muir first visited the valley, he wrote that it was "a grand landscape garden, one of Nature's rarest and most precious mountain temples."

In Muir's day, Hetch Hetchy was a wide, grassy valley with the Tuolumne River winding its way along the floor. Trees dotted the river bank and wildlife was abundant. It had been the summer home of the Miwok and Paiute people for more than 6,000 years and the tribes had periodically burned the floor to maintain the lush meadows. It looked a little something like Yosemite Valley. Some argue, even more beautiful.

Muir was one of the strongest voices in the lobby to make Yosemite a national park, a designation codified by Congress in 1890. At this point in history, national parks were a newly minted concept and weren't yet regulated. In those days, bears were being fed to delight visitors in Yellowstone, antiquities were being taken from Mesa Verde and San Francisco had its eye on the Tuolumne River.

DAMMING HETCH HETCHY

Following the devastating 1906 earthquake and the subsequent fires where 80% of the city was destroyed, San Francisco's need for a more-robust water source became crystal clear. In 1908, the city applied for development rights to dam the Tuolumne River at the most ideal spot (as far as engineers were concerned): the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

The U-shaped valley with its hard-to-erode granite walls and natural narrowing gave it the potential to store 117 billion gallons of pure Sierra snowmelt. Muir and his conservation organization, the Sierra Club, fought ardently against the damming of one of his favorite spots in the world.

"Dam Hetch Hetchy?" said Muir. "As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man."

The fight that's been credited with starting the environmental movement ultimately failed when, in 1913, Congress signed the Raker Act allowing a single city to dam a river on federal land for its individual use. The O'Shaughnessy Dam was completed in 1918 and the valley was completely flooded by 1923.

Three years after the Raker Act was passed, President Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act giving the newly created National Park Service the purpose to conserve the parks "by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

While it was too late for Hetch Hetchy, the new act safeguarded other national parks from similar fates.

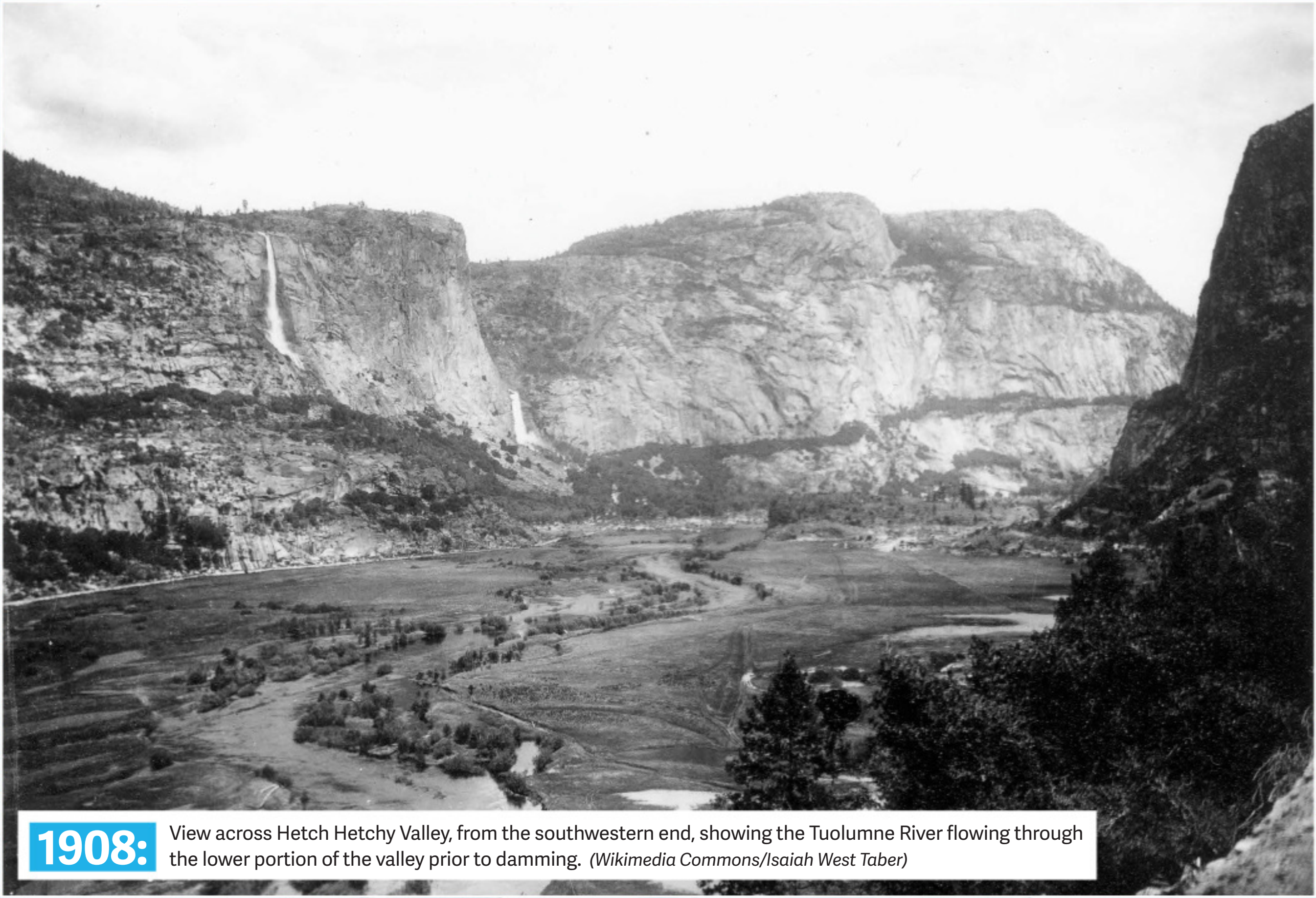
In the hundred years that have passed since the reservoir's completion, water in the Bay-Delta (the official name for the watershed encompassing all the rivers that feed into the San Francisco Bay from the Sacramento River in the north to the San Joaquin River in the south) hasn't lost its controversy.

The 2020-22 water years (which ended Sept. 30, 2022) were the three driest years on record for the state of California and the term "mega-drought" has become common-place. While the dialogue around the West's water wars has been concentrated on the Colorado River and the alarming decline of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, watersheds across the Western United States are feeling the effects of a rapidly aridifying landscape due to climate change. As of October 2022, Hetch Hetchy was at 77.5% of its capacity.

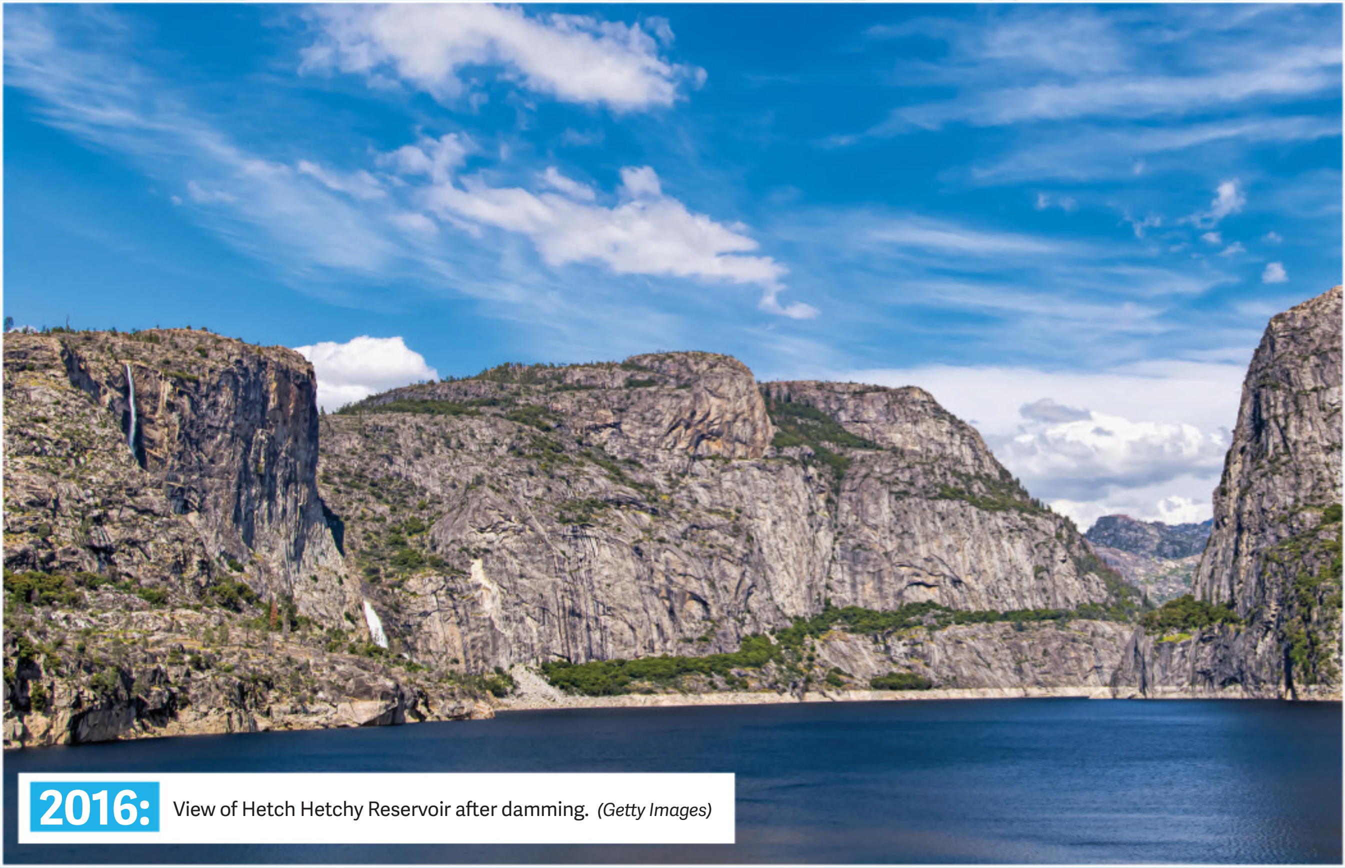
THE FIGHT FOR THE BAY-DELTA

One example of these controversies is the current proposal for the Delta Conveyance Project by the California State Water

Keep Reading on pg. 78→



1908: View across Hetch Hetchy Valley, from the southwestern end, showing the Tuolumne River flowing through the lower portion of the valley prior to damming. *(Wikimedia Commons/Isaiah West Taber)*



2016: View of Hetch Hetchy Reservoir after damming. *(Getty Images)*

Project that would build a tunnel diverting millions of acre-feet of fresh water from the Sacramento River in the north near the communities of Clarksburg, Hood and Courtland and carry it to the Bethany Reservoir, southeast of Stockton.

Two-thirds of the state of California's water originates in the Sierra Nevada mountains as snow and flows through a network of rivers, crossing the Bay-Delta through natural channels to provide water to California residents and farmlands.

The main reasoning behind this project, according to the California Department of Water Resources, is that the current system of relying on the natural channels is vulnerable to earthquakes and sea level rise. The department is concerned that aging infrastructure could pose threats to the state's water system should a natural disaster like an earthquake strike, or in the face of worsening climate change.

A tunnel, however, would mean that millions of acre-feet of that fresh Sierra Nevada snowmelt wouldn't flow through the Bay-Delta.

The Bay-Delta is a beautiful and complex ecosystem with 700 miles of sloughs, marshes and waterways which support migration, local recreation and is the life-blood for many communities.

The endangered Chinook salmon uses the Bay-Delta's waterways to spawn and migrating birds, such as Sandhill Cranes, spend their winters in the area. Multi-generational family farms rely on the delta to water their crops and the waterways and wetlands provide recreational opportunities for the area's residents, most of which are minorities. In the 2020 Census, 72.3% of San Joaquin County residents identified as non-white.

When snowpack is low, which it has been in the past few drought-stricken years, water flows are also low. These low freshwater flows allow for increased salt water to enter and damage or destroy ecosystems. These low flows also cause shallower water, which warms up faster and causes toxic algal blooms which pollute the waterways, killing fish and wildlife and making people and pets sick who come into contact with the tainted water. A University of Michigan study also found that algal blooms can enter the air, causing not only water pollution but air pollution.

The proposed tunnel would only further restrict fresh water flows to the Bay-Delta, intensifying the effects of climate change.

While water security is a heavy topic to weigh against environmental issues, the Sierra Club argues that the Delta Conveyance Project isn't just a bad idea for the humans and ecosystems of the Bay-Delta. They argue that it also isn't a solution to the infrastructure problem the area faces which triggered the proposal in the first place.

"The project is currently estimated to cost $16 billion and we argue that, for this high cost of a project, it's unlikely to deliver what it proposes to deliver," says Sierra Club California conservation coordinator Molly Culton. "It won't be completed until 2040 so it wouldn't meet our water needs right now and it wouldn't create new water."

Instead of the costly project that the club argues against, their proposed plan includes local and regional solutions like stormwater capture, groundwater recharge, conservation and efficiency measures and water recycling, as well as funding to repair aging infrastructure like levees.

"The California State Water Project argues that the tunnel will help protect the Project from seismic risk, but it's just one part of the Project," argues Culton. "All the other infrastructure isn't proposed to be updated or retrofitted. So there will still be weaknesses in the Project."

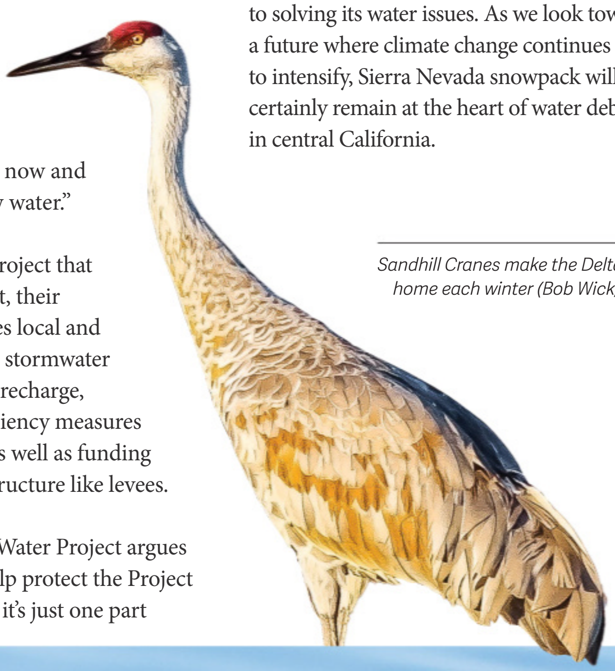
As of October 2022, a draft Environmental Impact Report was out for comment on the tunnel. After the comment period closes, a final report will be issued mid-2023 to decide the project's fate. California Representative Josh Harder introduced a bill to stop the tunnel at the federal level in September 2022.

OTHER BATTLES IN THE WATER WARS

The Delta Conveyance Project is just one way central California is feeling the squeeze when it comes to water. Along the Tuolumne River, which is controlled by the O'Shaughnessy Dam, the Tuolumne River Trust is fighting for higher in-stream flows to support a struggling ecosystem, including dwindling salmon populations.

In Yosemite an ambitious group, Restore Hetch Hetchy, continues John Muir's fight against the dam and calls for its removal.

It's been 100 years and California is no closer to solving its water issues. As we look towards a future where climate change continues to intensify, Sierra Nevada snowpack will certainly remain at the heart of water debates in central California.



Sandhill Cranes make the Delta their home each winter (Bob Wick, BLM)

To learn more about the Delta Conveyance Project and to sign the Sierra Club petition against it if you live in California, visit: sierraclub.org/california/sf-bay-delta-protection.

NorCal Basecamp

By Tori Peglar

Halfway between Yosemite and San Francisco sits Modesto—a city where fresh food, outdoor adventure and delicious almond butter shakes come together to create a unique experience. Located 90 miles from the Golden Gate Bridge, Yosemite Valley and wine country, Modesto is the perfect basecamp for your next getaway to Northern California.

In town, stop at farm stands like Rodin Ranch, Loretelli Farms or Smith Ranch and pick up fresh produce and fruit. And then there are the gastropubs with spacious outdoor seating, like the hip Camp 4 Wine Café, named after Yosemite's famed rock-climbing basecamp, and owned by Damon Robbins, the son of the late legendary Yosemite rock climber Royal Robbins. If you're looking for authentic, affordable Mexican food, head to the dozen or so taco trucks at Grub Hubs at the corner of 9th and G Streets.

Visit mid-February to mid-March when pink-and-white blossoms blanket thousands of almond trees. More than 75% of the world's almonds are harvested in the Central Valley, and it's worth seeing them in bloom.

"It's one of the prettiest things you'll ever see," says Todd Aaronson, CEO of Modesto Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Download an Almond Blossom Cruise map and learn more at FillYourPack.com.

Almond flowers (Depositphotos)

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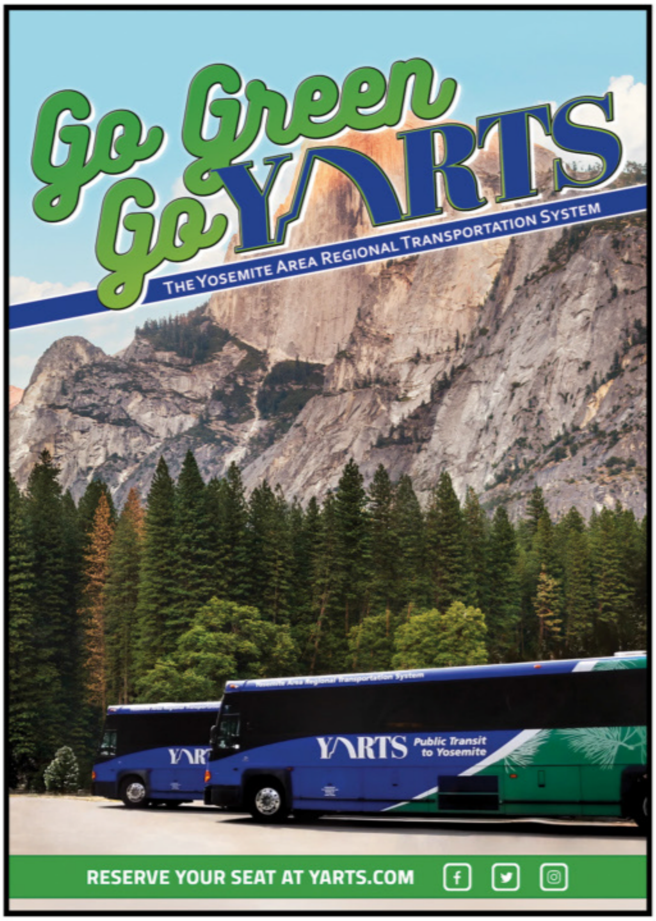

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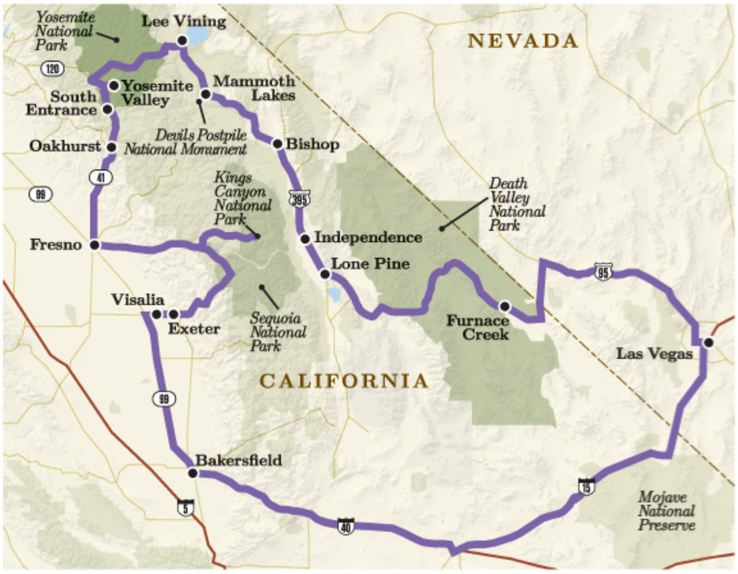
Viva Las Vegas

Zabriskie Point in Death Valley National Park (Ryan Preacher)

Follow this route from the lights of Las Vegas to the Eastern Sierra plus three national parks, finding "-ests" along the way. These lowest, hottest, oldest and tallest places are waiting to be discovered.


Yosemite National Park
Lee Vining
NEVADA
120
Yosemite Valley
Mammoth Lakes
South Entrance
Devils Postpile National Monument
Oakhurst
Bishop
41
99
Kings Canyon National Park
395
Death Valley National Park
Fresno
Independence
Lone Pine
95
Visalia
Exeter
Sequoia National Park
Furnace Creek
Las Vegas
CALIFORNIA
99
Bakersfield
15
5
40
Mojave National Preserve

We so often find beauty in soft things: a pink sunset, a bouquet of flowers, a sparkling beach. Many of us write off the extremes of the spectrum as harsh places not worth considering, but this road trip leans into them.

Start amongst the loud and glittering scene of the Las Vegas Strip, the brightest spot on the planet, before pointing your wheels westward. You'll find Death Valley National Park, which is a land known for its extremes. Its elevation ranges from 282 feet below sea level (the lowest point in North America) to 11,049-foot Telescope Peak and recorded the world's hottest temperature of 134-degrees Fahrenheit in 1913.

From Death Valley, head towards the towering Sierra Nevada mountains. There grows the oldest living thing on Earth, the Methuselah Tree near Bishop, along with fascinating history to explore before crossing over Tioga Pass into Yosemite. You'll encounter looming rock formations and pounding waterfalls. Stop in Fresno on your way to Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks, where you'll find some of the world's tallest trees. Just walking underneath them will make you feel small.

As you finish the route, passing through the towns surrounding the parks like Visalia, Exeter and, farther south, Bakersfield, you'll realize that extremes can be beautiful too. Read on to discover our favorite route through this landscape.

PHOTOS: Canoeing in Sequoia National Park (Sungjin Ahn), Cathedral Peak and Lake in Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park (Getty Images)

PHOTO: Badwater Basin sunrise (Amy Novotny)

Death Valley's SCENIC STOPS

Just two hours from Las Vegas, here are our favorite things to see in this mesmerizing park.

By Tori Peglar

After you enter Death Valley, Zabriskie Point is your first major scenic stop. A fantastic sunrise or sunset location for photographers, it's one of the park's most iconic features. You'll have to walk a very short, but fairly steep, paved hill up to see the view. When you reach the overlook, you'll see striking badlands with bands of purples, reds, oranges and tan. For a short, moderate hike, do the 2.7-mile roundtrip Badlands Loop that leaves from the parking lot.

It becomes very apparent why the area along Artist's Drive is called Artist's Palette because it looks as though an artist swept her brush across the hillsides. Take in the views from the parking lot or walk as far as you want to up the dirt trail to see even better views.

Continue south on Badwater Road to see the curious sight called Devils Golf Course. The ground is covered with thousands of jagged spires made from rock salt eroded from the valley's wind and infrequent rainfall. The park service recommends taking in the scene from the parking lot to avoid damaging the fragile landscape. What makes it really unusual is the Rice Krispies-like sounds you'll hear if you listen carefully or put your ear to the ground. It's the sound of tiny salt crystals popping as they shrink and expand with fluctuating temperatures.

Up next? Farther south, you'll find yourself 282 feet below sea level, the lowest point in North America: Badwater Basin. While you won't be submerged, you'll be surrounded by polygon-shaped salt flats. Take in the mesmerizing views from your car in the parking lot or, if it's cool out, walk a quarter-mile past the wooden boardwalk to the packed white salt flats.

Head back to 190 North to reach awe-inspiring and super-accessible Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes located right by Stovepipe Wells. From Hwy. 190, you literally pull up in front of the dunes, the highest of which is 100 feet tall. The best photos of these dunes are at sunrise and sunset. Get out of the car and explore them with covered shoes because the sand heats up as the sun rises higher in the sky.

Located on the far western edge of the park, Rainbow Canyon offers more than just views of the Panamint Mountains and a deep canyon. The majority of people flock here with the hope that they'll spot a fighter jet zooming through the canyon, which stretches for more than five miles with walls that rise some 1,000 feet upwards to the sky. It's one of the few places where photographers can take photos of fighter jets from above. Since World War II, the U.S. military has used this restricted military airspace for fighter jet training.

TIP

Death Valley has recorded the highest temperatures on Earth, and in the summer it often exceeds 120-degrees Fahrenheit. The park is best visited in the cooler months. Check the weather ahead of time and avoid venturing out on hot days. Most of the park has no cell service, so be prepared at all times with lots of water, even if you don't plan to leave your vehicle.

"Methuselah" tree in the Acient Bristlecone Pine Forest (ChaoYen)

Picture Perfect

Spend a few days exploring amazing sights along the Eastern Sierra's Hwy. 395 from Bishop to Lone Pine.

By Mikaela Ruland

Yosemite and Death Valley national parks might be the reason you head to Eastern California, but if you didn't plan to spend a few days on the stunning stretch of Hwy. 395 between the two, you'd be seriously missing out. United offers seasonal flights to Bishop from San Francisco and Denver, making it the perfect place to start your California adventure.

Begin at South Lake, 25 minutes outside of Bishop, where you can rent a kayak at Parchers Resort or hike the 5.4-mile one-way Treasure Lakes Trail for unparalleled Sierra Nevada beauty.

For a taste of the area's history, don't miss Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center in Bishop, which provides a detailed look at the local Paiute and Shoshone tribes from beautiful baskets to intricate beads and tools.

Go even further back in time at the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, an hour's drive east of Bishop to see some of the oldest living things on Earth. One bristlecone pine tree, known as the "Methuselah" tree, is still alive after 4,850 years. There's nothing quite like a walk among it and other ancient bristlecone pines, many more than 2,000 years old.

Six miles south of Independence, you'll find Manzanar National Historic Site where an estimated 10,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. While most of the internment camp was dismantled after the war, a replica barrack and mess hall offer insights into camp life, and the restored camp auditorium serves as a visitor center.

Near Shoshone, stop by the China Ranch Date Farm where you'll find a lush oasis filled with date palms. Go on a guided nature walk to learn more about the area before stopping by the gift shop to purchase different varieties of dates and products made with the fruit.

Learn more about what to do in Inyo County and Bishop at InyoCountyVisitor.com and BishopVisitor.com.

Ride the Bus

By Mikaela Ruland

501
Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System
YARTS Public Transit to Yosemite
YARTS

With 3.3 million visitors last year Yosemite, known for its stunning scenery, can be a difficult place to park your car. Avoid wasting time finding a parking spot when you climb aboard the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System, best known simply as YARTS.

If you're traveling by car, the buses make stops along four routes into the park: Hwy. 120/395 starting in Mammoth Lakes; Hwy. 120 starting in Sonora; Hwy. 41 starting in Oakhurst and Hwy. 140 from Merced and Mariposa.

YARTS provides easy connection services to people traveling by train and bus. If you're traveling on Amtrak or Greyhound to Merced, your YARTS fare is included in your ticket price. Once you're in Yosemite Valley, take the free park shuttle, serving the valley, El Capitan, Tuolumne Meadows (in summer) and Badger Pass Ski Area (in winter).

Learn more and buy your tickets at YARTS.com.

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Outside+

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Sienna Fry
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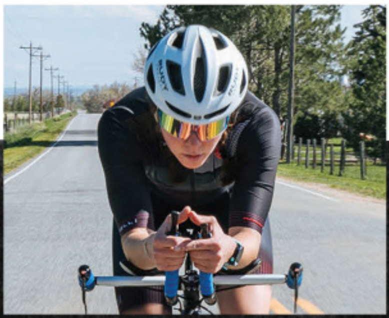
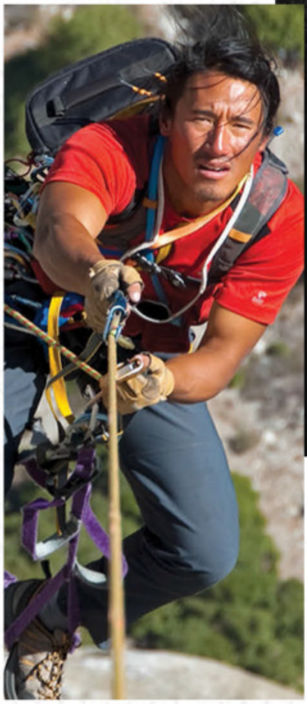


Jim Vance & Maren York
10 Weeks to Your Best 70.3

Chady Dunmore
Fast-Track Fitness

Dr. Tom Schwartz
6 Weeks to a Faster You



Jimmy Chin
Climbing Photography

Derrick “DJ” Townsel
Yoga for Strength & Flexibility

Beth Lipton
High Protein Meals

Erin MacDonald & Tiffani Bachus
28-Day Real-Food Reboot

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Lorem ipsum

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Pick Your Perfect Yosemite Activity

By Mikaela Ruland

With so many activity options in Yosemite, ranging from family-friendly to skilled adventures, it can be difficult to decide what to do. Do you lazily float down a river or make the strenuous climb up a granite dome? Use our guide to pick the best activity from park concessionaire, Aramark, based on your vacation style.

Family Fun Seeker

If your adventures include kids, **bike Yosemite Valley**. Head to Curry Village, Yosemite Village or Yosemite Valley Lodge to rent bikes and explore the bike paths along the valley floor. Hop on the free park shuttle when the kids get tired. If it's a hot day, another great option is to **float down the Merced River** where you'll catch a striking view of Half Dome along a gentle float. Rent a four-person raft at the Curry Village kiosk, but aim to get there early before the 100 rafts are rented out for the day. The 3-mile float through the valley ends at Sentinel Beach where a shuttle will bring you back to the village. For an easy hike with the little ones, **walk around Mirror Lake**. This gentle, 2-mile roundtrip trail in Yosemite Valley goes to the picturesque lake and back, or extend it to 5 miles by walking all the way around the lake. At the end of the day, **camp in a tent cabin at Curry Village**, a glamping experience the kids will love.

Adventure Chaser

Adrenaline seekers and those just looking to get some miles under their feet have plenty of options. **Go on a guided backpacking** trip to Clouds Rest or the Cathedral Range with Yosemite Mountaineering School.

These two-to-four-day trips will get you deep into Yosemite's backcountry. Or, **learn how to rock climb** with the same school. The Yosemite Mountaineering School offers excursions ranging from beginner to advanced. You can even book an El Capitan climb. Each group is limited to six students ages 10 and up and one instructor. The beginner rock climbing class, "Welcome to the Rock," is based at a beginner's climbing area where you'll learn all about rock climbing gear and how to climb Yosemite's famous granite.

Winter Warrior

Crowds disappear in the winter months in Yosemite, making it a perfect time to explore. Go **cross-country skiing** on 90 miles of trails, 25 of which are groomed. For an epic adventure, ski 21 miles to Glacier Point and stay in a hut. Rentals are available at Badger Pass Ski Area—one of the only ski areas in a national park—where you can also **downhill ski or snowboard**. Set the little ones up with ski or snowboard lessons while the adults enjoy runs ranging from beginner to advanced. If you haven't gotten enough of the cold yet, head to the outdoor rink at Curry Village where you can **ice skate under Half Dome**. Take in the wintry views and do a few laps around the rink before warming up next to the fire pit.

Sightseer

If leisurely taking in the sights is more your style, turn to pages 12-13 where you can learn about **dining at the historic Ahwahnee Hotel** or **taking a photography workshop with the Ansel Adams Gallery**. A **guided bus or tram tour** is also a great way to see the park's best views.

All these activities, lodging and more can be booked at TravelYosemite.com.

PHOTOS: Biking Yosemite Valley, Tent Cabin at Curry Village, Crosscountry skiing on Glacier Point Road (Courtesy Yosemite Hopitality)

Mountain Escape

Just two miles from Yosemite's South Entrance, this gorgeous spot offers a relaxing, resort-style vacation.

By Tori Peglar

It's just a couple of miles from Yosemite's famous Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias full of the planet's largest single trees. But you'll feel worlds away from everything at Tenaya at Yosemite.

Swimming pools, restaurants and a spa await you. Tenaya offers activities like archery classes and a rock-climbing wall, making it perfect for families. For adults, the world-class Ascent Spa is the only full-service spa at the park's South Entrance and uses organic and thoughtfully sourced products. With on-site restaurants, you don't need to spend time driving to eat. The renovated Jackalopes Bar & Grill features gluten-free and vegan options, along with made-to-order burgers. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Timberloft Pizzeria serves wood-fired pizzas to fuel up after a day outside.

Then rest your head in the lodge, a cottage room or a suite. You can also get cozy in a two-bedroom Explorer Cabin. The cabins are under a 10-minute walk from the lodge, but you can ride a Tenaya shuttle, available 24/7, to and from the cabins.

The best way to avoid navigating Yosemite and its parking issues? Board Tenaya's Yosemite 360 Tour Buses for stunning panoramic views. Choose between a half-day or full-day tour, or a Junior Ranger tour for kids. It's that VIP experience where you don't have to worry about parking or logistics.

Learn more at VisitTenaya.com.

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A FORGOTTEN HISTORY

Tioga Road overlooking Tenaya Lake (Gettyimages)

In the late 1800s, Chinese immigrants faced bitter winters, grueling working conditions and intense racism to help build Yosemite and the West.

By Mikaela Ruland

When most of us think of Yosemite's history, there's a few figures that come to mind: John Muir, Ansel Adams, Royal Robbins. While these white men were foundational to building the park and its culture we see today, there's an often forgotten piece of park history that has its own set of important historical figures.

In 1915 a group of important politicians and businessmen embarked on a two-week trek through Sequoia National Park. Led by Stephen Mather, this expedition had one goal: convince these influential men of the merits of national parks and how they needed a dedicated agency to oversee them.

The party camped under giant sequoias, climbed Moro Rock, rode through canyons and even summitted Mt. Whitney. While the area's incredible natural beauty charmed the group, the expedition was made even more magical by a Chinese American named Tie Sing.

Sing had made a name for himself as the head chef of the U.S. Geological Survey. So much so that in 1899, a peak on the border of Yosemite had been named after him.

He was the chef on Mather's "Mountain Party" and Mather's assistant, Horace Albright, documented Sing's incredible cooking from plum pudding to fried chicken to venison. Sing was an ingenious backcountry cook and used techniques like letting bread rise during the day close to the bodies of pack mules to keep it warm and wrapping meat in wet newspaper to keep it cool. Sing kept the members of the party well-fed and contributed to the experience that convinced these influential men to eventually create the National Park Service.

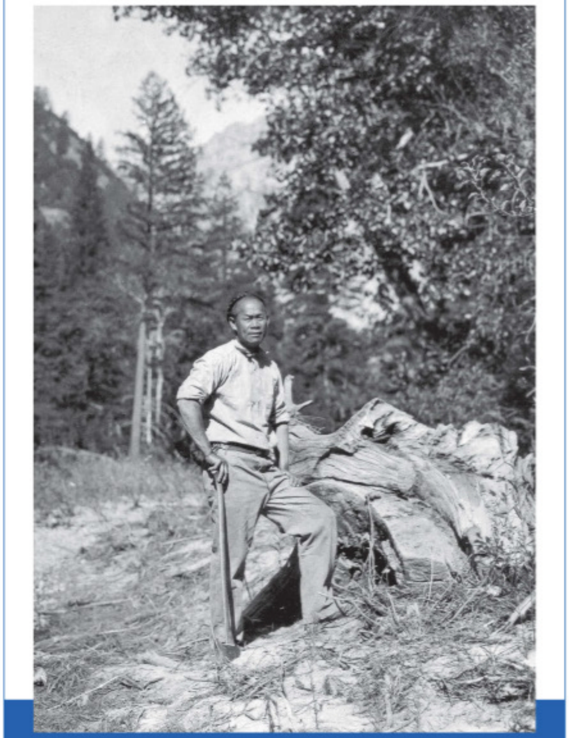
Sing was just one of scores of Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants who helped to build Yosemite and the rest of the West.

How Chinese Immigrants Helped Build Yosemite

In the 1840s, countless Chinese left their home country thanks to environmental disaster and social upheaval. Many headed to California to seek a better life with other hopeful miners in the Gold Rush until California's 1850 Foreign Miners' Tax made gold mining expensive. This led lots of immigrants to search for other work. For Chinese immigrants this included cooking, like Sing, laundry and manual labor.

Today Yosemite's Tioga Road, which goes up and over 9,943-foot Tioga Pass, closes to vehicle traffic each winter as road conditions turn harrowing when the snow flies. The mountainous road that leads up and over the Sierra Nevada is impressive whether you know its history or not. When you learn that its predecessor was built in 18 weeks with just hand tools, it becomes even more impressive. Add in the fact that this feat was done in winter and it becomes truly stunning.

The Great Sierra Wagon Road, which became Tioga Road, was built in the 1880s by 250 Chinese immigrants and 90 European-American laborers in 130 days. They blasted their way through rock, built retaining walls and used shovels and handpicks. Chinese workers also built the old Washburn Road, which is now the Washburn Trail between Wawona and Mariposa Grove.



Tie Sing, a 21-year veteran cook of the U.S. Geological Survey, in the field. 1909 - Yosemite National Park. (Courtesy USGS)

The Transcontinental Railroad Race

North of Yosemite, Chinese immigrants were also vital in connecting the country by building the first trans-continental railroad, stretching from San Francisco to Council Bluffs, Iowa along the Missouri River. Beginning in 1863, two companies began racing to build this marvel. The Central Pacific Railroad started from Sacramento, moving east and the Union Pacific Railroad started from Council Bluffs, moving west. The Central Pacific arguably had the more difficult task, needing to tunnel through the Sierra Nevada mountains in order to head east.

Starting in 1865, the Central Pacific Railroad used a contracting firm to bring over somewhere between 10-15,000 Chinese immigrants from the Guangzhou province to act as cheap labor to build the railroads when they struggled to find white laborers willing to take the job. The work was horribly grueling. Workers blasted and dug 15 tunnels through solid granite, through winter snow and summer sun. They endured blasting accidents, avalanches and 12-hour work days, six days a week. Deaths and injuries were rarely documented so it's unclear just how many Chinese workers died to build the railroads but some estimates put the number at more than 1,000. Despite risking their lives, Chinese immigrants were still paid significantly less, and received fewer benefits, than their white counterparts, according to Stanford's Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project.

The Central Pacific line eventually was completed up and over the Sierra Nevada mountains at the infamous 7,000-foot Donner Pass and in May 1869 the two railroads met at Promontory Summit in Utah, 66 miles northwest of Salt Lake City. This new railroad linked up with established routes east of the Missouri River, completing the first railroad that ran from coast to coast, revolutionizing America. The new railroad made transport of goods, as well as settlement in the West, much easier.

Despite the country's first trans-continental railroad being literally built on the backs of Chinese laborers, Chinese immigrants felt the effects of intense racism. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed by President Arthur, prohibiting the immigration of all Chinese laborers for 10 years. This was the first U.S. law ever implemented specifically banning immigration from one ethnic group or nation.

The impact Chinese immigrants had on building important parts of the West is one that's often lost in time. Much of the Yosemite history would have stayed lost had it not been for one park ranger, Yenyen Chan. She did much of the research to uncover the vital role Chinese immigrants played in building Yosemite. Her work resulted in the Chinese laundry building near Wawona being restored and new educational exhibits telling the history of these immigrants in building the park we see today.

As you visit Yosemite Valley and Tioga Pass, take a moment to appreciate the deep history that remains quietly hidden in the park.

Yosemite National Park to Fresno

Fresno FINDS

Spend a few days exploring one of the closest cities to Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks before hitting the trails.

By Mikaela Ruland

Sea Lion Cove at Fresno Chaffee Zoo (Courtesy Fresno/Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau)

In the middle of the summer there's no better place to cool down than at Forestiere Underground Gardens. This underground wonderland was created over the course of 40 years starting in 1906 when Baldassare Forestiere built a subterranean home filled with underground rooms, passageways and courtyards full of plants that thrive underground. Today, this amazing architectural feat is open to the public. Reservations for the hour-long guided tour are required.

There's a huge mural at 736 Fulton Street in downtown Fresno declaring this area of town as the "Brewery District". Not only is it home to a burgeoning craft brewery scene, but it's also full of murals, making a self-guided brewery and art tour a perfect way to spend an evening. Start at Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Company with beers named after landmarks like Half Dome and General Sherman Tree. Next, head to Full Circle Brewing Co., where you'll find IPAs alongside all sorts of entertainment from live music to roller derby to cornhole competitions. End the night at The Modernist, an upscale craft cocktail bar with a menu that's sure to impress.

Fresno's neighboring town, Clovis, is home to a charming historic downtown district that dates back to 1912. All the businesses from the boutiques to the restaurants to the coffee shops are independently owned. Stop by On the Edge Coffee House, which features local artists and has a piano out front. Spend the morning wandering through the unique shops and boutiques and grab a leisurely lunch at The Craft House. The restaurant features a truly eclectic menu with something for everyone from poke nachos to chicken and waffles.

Dedicate a whole day to journeying around the world at the Fresno Chaffee Zoo. It's home to more than 200 species and has interactive and award-winning habitats that will make you feel like you've been transported.

Start at Sea Lion Cove where you can see California sea lions and harbor seals in a habitat that mimics the coast. You can watch these animated creatures play from a cliff overlook or head to the underwater viewing area where you can watch them swim.

At African Adventure you can look out across 13 acres and imagine you're on the savannah as you take in the views of lions, cheetahs, elephants and more. Don't miss feeding the giraffes at Twiga Terrace. You'll climb to a tall platform where you'll be at eye level with these incredible giants. All interactive experiences at the zoo are to the animals' preference so if the giraffes don't feel like interacting, they aren't forced to come over. This experience costs extra but if you purchase the Total Zoo Experience with your tickets, it's included. So is Stingray Bay, where you can feed stingrays in a shallow pool.

Scan the QR code at the zoo entrance when you arrive to get the day's schedule of events along with a map. Keeper Chats happen at various times throughout the day and they're well worth scheduling your visit around. The zookeepers are a wealth of knowledge, and you'll get to see animals participating in enrichment experiences.

Learn more about Fresno and Clovis at VisitFresnoCounty.org, and more about the Fresno Chaffee Zoo at FresnoChaffeeZoo.org.

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Three-Park Adventure

Take the Majestic Mountain Loop, a three-day itinerary, to explore Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. Below are our top highlights for Sequoia and Kings Canyon. Find Yosemite's best experiences on pages 12-13.

By Mikaela Ruland

1 Climb Moro Rock in Sequoia

Moro Rock's quarter-mile, 350-plus step climb offers equally spectacular views as its more intense sister, Half Dome, located in Yosemite National Park. Park at the Giant Forest Museum and take the seasonal free shuttle to the trailhead to avoid circling for parking in the small lot at the rock's base. On summer weekends, the shuttle is the only way to get to the trailhead.

2 Drive through Sequoia's Tunnel Log

No trip to this park is complete without driving under the iconic Tunnel Log. In 1937, the 2,000-year-old tree fell across the road and is now a tunnel.

TIP: Tunnel Log is only eight feet high, so taller vehicles must drive around.

3 See the World's Largest Tree in Sequoia

General Sherman reigns king over the giant sequoias at 275 feet tall. See this noble tree via the half-mile Main Trail. To see more breathtaking giants, continue past General Sherman on the 2-mile paved Congress Trail.

General Sherman Tree at Sequoia National Park (Depositphotos)

4 Go Underground at Boyden Cavern near Kings Canyon

Join a walking tour into the cavern that departs on the hour to see awe-inspiring marble formations. The cavern is open late May through early November and tickets can be purchased at the cavern's entrance. The cavern remains a steady 55-degrees year-round, so bring a jacket.

5 See the Nation's Christmas Tree at Kings Canyon

Given it's nickname by President Coolidge, the General Grant Tree is the second largest in the world. On the second Sunday of December, join the annual "Trek to the Tree" at 2:30 p.m. to celebrate the holidays, an event that's been taking place for almost 100 years.

6 Hike Kings Canyon's Zumwalt Meadow

You'll see the best of Kings Canyon from granite walls to verdant green meadows on this 1.5-mile trail in the park's Cedar Grove area. Heavy spring rains can flood this meadow, so always check trail conditions at the visitor center before heading out on the trail. The road to this trailhead, Hwy. 180, is closed in winter, mid-November through the fourth Saturday in April.

All three parks on this loop have experienced wildfire in the past few years. Be sure to check for closures and conditions before visiting. Wildfire is a natural part of the ecosystem. You may be surprised how changing landscapes can reveal new and beautiful vistas. Please help protect these beautiful places by recreating responsibly. Learn more at MajesticMountainLoop.com.

3 PARKS

MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN Loop

3 DAYS

SEQUOIA - KINGS CANYON - YOSEMITE

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DAY 1 Sequoia National Park

STOP 1 - GIANT FOREST MUSEUM
STOP 2 - DRIVE THROUGH TUNNEL LOG
STOP 3 - MORO ROCK
STOP 4 - GENERAL SHERMAN TREE
STOP 5 - CRYSTAL CAVE

DAY 2 Kings Canyon National Park

STOP 1 - GENERAL GRANT TREE
STOP 2 - PANORAMIC POINT
STOP 3 - BIG STUMP TRAIL
STOP 4 - ROARING RIVER FALLS
STOP 5 - THE ROAD'S END

DAY 3 Yosemite National Park

STOP 1 - MARIPOSA GROVE - GIANT SEQUOIAS
STOP 2 - WAWONA PIONEER HISTORY CENTER
STOP 3 - GLACIER POINT (Closed 2022)
STOP 4 - TUNNEL VIEW
STOP 5 - YOSEMITE VALLEY

Background photo by:

Michael Bizzle

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More Info

www.MajesticMountainLoop.com

VISIT YOSEMITE MADERA COUNTY

VISIT Visalia

Sequoia National Park to Visalia

Naturally Outdoors

Explore the towns that sit at the foot of Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks.

By Tori Peglar

Get outdoors and experience agritourism at its best in towns like Visalia, Porterville, Dinuba and Exeter where farms that roll up to the towering Sierra Nevada mountains to the east are filled with the intoxicating scent of peaches, table grapes and oranges.

"Many families are looking to enhance their national park trip by exploring the gateway communities just outside the parks," says Suzanne Bianco, tourism marketing director of Visit Visalia, noting the area is nestled against Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. "Not only can visitors learn where their food comes from, they can taste fresh-from-the-farm meals cooked by local chefs who partner with the farmers for the freshest ingredients."

Start off at Bravo Farms' cheese factory off Hwy. 99 in Traver to sample cheese and California wine, watch staff make artisanal cheese, visit the petting farm and dine at Wild Jacks restaurant on-site. Head to Rosa Brothers Creamery in Tulare for free ice cream samples and to watch it being crafted. Then book a farm tour at Farmer Bob's World in Ivanhoe to take a wagon through orange groves, pick citrus and shop the farm store.

Stop at the Bari Olive Oil gift shop and tasting room in Dinuba to discover infused and organic olive oil. Owners Ryan and Kyle Sawatzky are the fifth generation to farm the property founded in 1936. And don't miss Stafford Chocolates in Porterville.

In Earlimart, you'll find Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park where Allensworth, a former slave, and a handful of families established a town in 1908 governed by Black people. While its prominence faded after Allensworth's death in 1914, you can tour his house, a historic schoolhouse, a Baptist church and library.

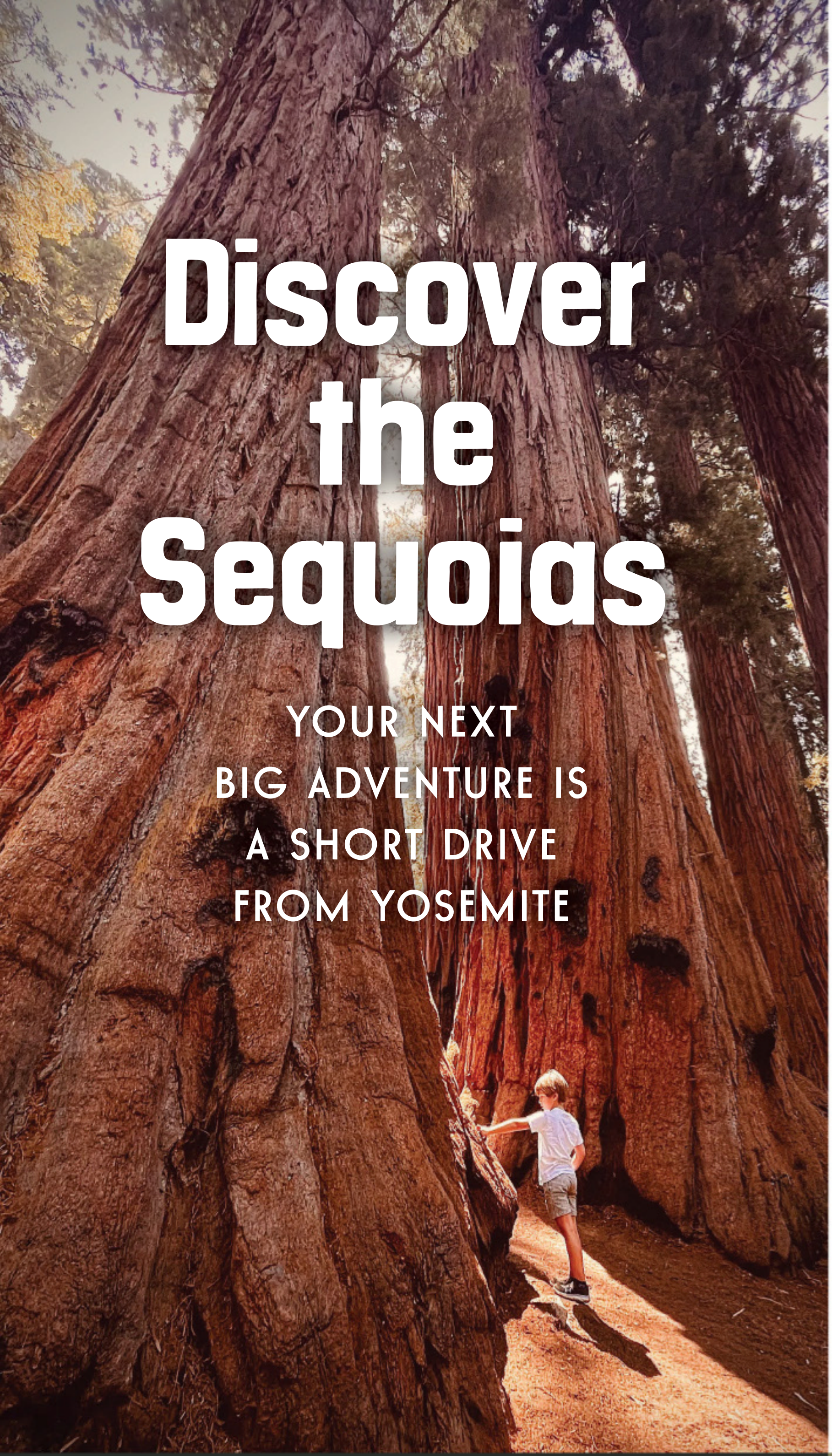
Beyond, you'll find outdoor shopping at the Tulare Outlets and beautiful flowers and produce at Woodlake Botanical Gardens, California's first agricultural botanical garden. In Exeter, 31 vibrant murals tell the story of the quaint town where restaurant names like Monet's Wine Bistro are a tribute to the arts and agriculture. The "When Emperors Ruled" mural captures an era before the county's popular Emperor grapes were upstaged by seedless varieties.

In Visalia, bring the kids to Sequoia Springs at Visalia Adventure Park that has water slides and a water-based play structure for younger kids. Or head to Kaweah Oaks Preserve and hike through one of the last remaining oak riparian forests in the valley.

"Vacation is meant to be a time to explore and experience," Bianco says. "Slow down and enjoy the journey."

Learn more at DiscoverTheSequoias.com.

PHOTO: Hiking through wildflowers at Sequoia National Park (Russell Smith)



Discover the Sequoias

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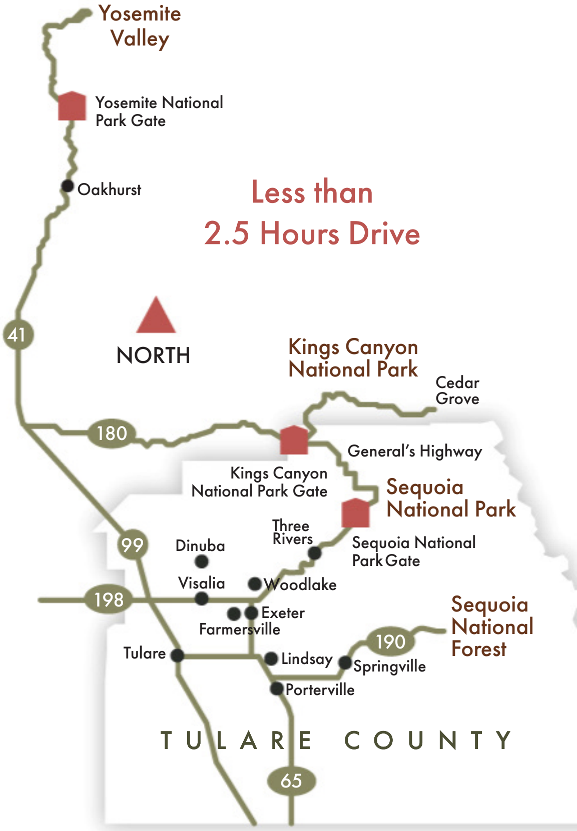
FROM YOSEMITE

Discover the biggest trees, the highest peak, and the deepest canyon in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument. Your next big adventure is here, whether exploring our National Parks and Forests or one of our charming and vibrant communities with craft brews, restaurants, the arts, shopping, dining, lodging options, and more.

There's so much to discover when you visit Tulare County!


Yosemite Valley
Yosemite National Park Gate
Oakhurst
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NORTH
Kings Canyon National Park
Cedar Grove
180
General's Highway
Kings Canyon National Park Gate
Sequoia National Park
Three Rivers
Sequoia National Park Gate
99
Dinuba
Visalia
Woodlake
198
Exeter
Farmersville
Sequoia National Forest
190
Tulare
Lindsay
Springville
Porterville
TULARE COUNTY
65

SEQUOIA
VISITOR

Official Guide of the
Sequoia Tourism Council

SCAN ME

For the FREE official visitor's guide to Tulare County, go to DiscoverTheSequoias.com

Roadside Stops

By Tori Peglar

As you head south, you'll enter Bakersfield, the ninth largest city in California. It's a hub for oil production, agriculture and birthplace of the Bakersfield Sound, a twangy genre of country music that was influenced by rock and electrical instruments.

On the streets of Bakersfield, there's so much to be discovered. Check out the brewery trail, seven restaurants included on Guy Fieri's *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* show, an Indian food truck, Punjabi Dhaba, that was featured in *The New York Times* and Nuestro México, hailed by *Thrillist.com* as having the best tacos in California. There are also more Basque restaurants here than any other place in the country.

Bike or walk along more than 30 miles of the Kern River Parkway Trail. Several hiking options are ready for you, like the Panorama Bluffs Walking Trail that overlooks the Kern River, or 370-acre Hart Park where you might even see roadrunners and wandering peacocks.

For a lively family-oriented show and meal, head to Buck Owens' Crystal Palace. Country singer Owens helped popularize the Bakersfield Sound with his 21 No. 1 hits on the Billboard country music charts during the 1960s. Peruse the museum onsite that showcases Owens' memorabilia. It's a good idea to make reservations.

Then stop by the California Living Museum to see more than 250 native California animals, including mountain lions as well as endangered desert bighorn sheep and California condors, that can no longer live in the wild because they were orphaned or have physical disabilities. At Kern County Museum, explore Pioneer Village composed of 60-plus original historic buildings, plus country singer Merle Haggard's childhood home.

Learn more at the visitor center, 515 Truxtun Ave., or at VisitBakersfield.com.

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Silver Lake Campground is a campsite inside of Inyo National Forest.

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